QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS INTO THE MIISTRY DYNAMICS OF CLERGY COUPLES WHO SHARE PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

Juliet Zacharias, D.Min.

B.S., University of Pittsburgh, College of Business Administration, 1999
M.Div., Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 2002

Mentor
William H. Curtis, D.Min.
Lance Watson, D.Min.

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ……... iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS …… v

INTRODUCTION ……..…… . 1

CHAPTER

1. MINISTRY FOCUS: INVESTIGATING THE GROWING PARADIGM OF CLERGY COUPLES WHO SHARE PASTORAL LEADERSHIP ……. 4

2. THE STATE OF THE ART IN CLERGY COUPLE MINISTRY/LITERATURE REVIEW ……...……. 8

3. FOUNDATIONS …..……15

   Historical Foundation: Historical Perspectives that Have Hindered Women's Equality and Full Participation in Church and Society ……... 15

   Biblical Foundation: Biblical Interpretations that Liberate Women to Be Full Participants with Men in Church Leadership …….. 37

   Theological Foundation: Toward a Theology of Men's and Women's Equality and Full Participation in God's Work ……. 55

4. PROJECT DESCRIPTION & METHODOLOGY: SEEKING QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS THROUGH THE USE OF IN-DEPTH CLERGY COUPLE INTERVIEWS ……. 72

5. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION: QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS GAINED FROM IN-DEPTH CLERGY COUPLE INTERVIEWS …...……..77

6. REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION …...……...97

APPENDIX …… 103

CLERGY COUPLE QUESTIONAIRRE ……... 104

BIBLIOGRAPHY ….……. 106

ABSTRACT

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OF CLERGY COUPLES WHO SHARE

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

by

Juliet F. Zacharias

United Theological Seminary, 2006

Mentor

William H. Curtis, D.Min.

Lance Watson, D.Min.

The emerging paradigm in the Christian church over the past few decades of husbands and wives sharing pastoral leadership presents a new reality for the church and is having an increasing impact on broadening the church's traditional sense of pastoral leadership. It is a worthy investigation, therefore, to examine this growing phenomenon for the purpose of gaining qualitative insights into the ministry dynamics of clergy couple team ministry. This doctoral project focuses on such an investigation. Using qualitative research methodologies, this project gained insight into various dynamics of clergy couple ministry by interviewing clergy couples in three different ministry contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

One cannot help but to notice that over the past several decades the literal face of preaching in America has changed drastically. The most notable change is that preaching has evolved (and is still evolving) from being a task reserved and pronounced as "for men only," to a task where the voice of the woman preacher is resounding loud and clear. The preaching clubhouse sign that once read in big bold-faced letters "NO GIRLS ALLOWED" has been replaced (and continues to be replaced) with a sign that reads, "THE SISTERS HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY, AND IT TOO IS GOOD NEWS!"

Needless to say, the ever-emerging front-line visibility of women in the church is not limited to preaching. Less and less are women settling for a title of "evangelist" simply for the sake of having male leadership claim to acknowledge their call and allow them to stand behind the "sacred desk" on the glorious one "Women's Day" Sunday morning service. More and more, women in the church are taking their place in structural leadership, stemming from a growing understanding that it is God's prerogative to call and choose women for more than being the majority in the pew and choir loft—that God does indeed call and choose women to be pastors, bishops, elders, and visionary leaders in God's church.

Because of the increasing shift from pew to pulpit for women, the church has been, and continues to be, faced with an interesting challenge. How does the church, a historically male dominated structure and system deal with the changing role of women?

Well, how the church deals with this issue certainly has not always been affirming to women and how they perceive themselves to be called and chosen of God. An interesting result, however, of the increasing emergence of women in church structural leadership is one that perhaps seems inevitable, but is actually emerging as newly chartered waters—that is, a team approach model to ministry that joins men and women, husbands and wives in particular, in shared pastoral leadership roles in the church.

This doctoral project, therefore, focuses on further exploration of this emerging paradigm of husband/wife team ministry for the purpose of gaining qualitative insight into its ministry dynamics. In chapter one, the ministry focus of the project is further elaborated on, and the author, Juliet Zacharias, gives insight into why this particular area of ministry is her focus. Chapter two follows by putting the project into greater perspective by reviewing the literature and relevant concepts that have already sought to address certain aspects of clergy couple ministry. Then, it is imperative that the foundation of the project is established. In order to adequately understand the emergence of this shared leadership model between husbands and wives, it is first important to examine how women have traditionally been hindered from full participation in the church, and the historical perspectives that fostered such hindrances. Chapter three develops this historical foundation for the project. Next, chapters four and five provide the vitally important biblical and theological foundations that liberate women to move beyond an oppressive history—foundations that affirm and encourage their full participation in the work of God. These foundations provide the vital framework for understanding the insights gained from investigating this clergy couple ministry phenomenon.

The remaining three chapters expound upon the actual doctoral project that was implemented to gain the qualitative insights that this project sought to capture. Chapter six defines the design of the doctoral project and the qualitative research methodology that was used to gain insight into the ministry dynamics of clergy couple ministry. Then, chapter seven focuses on describing the implementation of the project and presents the qualitative insights that were revealed through the process. The final chapter then provides the author's reflections regarding the process, as well as her concluding thoughts regarding the project's outcomes and areas for further investigation.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS: INVESTIGATING THE GROWING PARADIGM OF CLERGY COUPLES WHO SHARE PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

A new paradigm is emerging—"new" because although it is in the Christian tradition as old a model for ministry as the church itself, evident through the early church ministries of such husband and wife teams as Priscilla and Aquila, it is finally in contemporary times gaining validity as an effective ministry model of choice. This shared leadership ministry model, where women and men, especially wives and husbands, are partnering in the pulpit of churches across the nation has gained tremendous popularity in the past several years, and continues to do so. By simply watching any of the main Christian television networks (Trinity Broadcasting Network, Daystar, and the Word Network) or by attending popular Christian conferences, one cannot help but to witness the ministry model of husband and wife teams in action.

Floyd and Elaine Flake; Grainger and Jo Ann Browning; Creflo and Taffi Dollar; "Dr. Shine and Dee Dee"; Zachary & Rita Tims; Paula and Randy White; Susie and Alfred Owens; and Claudette & David Copeland, just to name a few, with their vibrant, growing and seemingly successful ministries are showing the contemporary church that the sharing of church pastoral leadership, when done effectively, can lead to the development of tremendously fruitful congregations. These more well-known contemporary ministry couples have emerged as defined partners and co-laborers in

God's vineyard. Even the ministries of those pastors who have been viewed more so as solo senior heads of ministries are drawing their spouses by their side and to the forefront in a way that suggests shared leadership, even if the title of the spouse is not so readily defined. Examples of this are evident in the ministries of prominent church leaders such as T. D. and Serita Jakes and Joel and Victoria Osteen.

Although this husband/wife team approach to ministry is highlighted on a national level by the ministries of such prominent church leaders as those mentioned above, it is important to note that such an approach is not limited to being a large, "mega," or "giga" church phenomenon. Nor is this approach limited to a particular church culture or tradition. On the contrary, this approach is gaining increasing acceptance across church settings, from small storefront churches to giga churches, from Black churches to White churches, and from mainline denominational churches to non-denominational churches.

As the author's own ministry context is that of being in a ministry team with her husband, Juliet is particularly interested and has a vested interest in knowing what makes for effective team ministry between husbands and wives. The rather swift increase and steadily growing appeal of couples standing side-by-side under God's care to lead congregations forward calls for further investigation and analysis of this emerging paradigm. Understanding the factors that have contributed to this emerging sense of co-equal team consciousness in the contemporary church will prove to be invaluable as this approach to ministry is embraced by the larger church and broadens the church's traditional sense of pastoral leadership. Also, because Juliet's context has always been the Black church, and because of the differing heritages and traditions between the Black

church and the White church in America, this investigation focuses primarily on the emergence of this shared leadership model in the Black church experience.

There is much about Juliet's spiritual pilgrimage that has made the subject of this doctoral project a significant focus for her ministry today. At age eleven, she moved from inner-city Philadelphia, where she grew up with her mother, stepfather, and siblings to live with her father, stepmother and other siblings, who were a military clergy family. Juliet's father was an ordained minister—an army chaplain who was also the pastor of the Protestant congregation on the army bases where her family was stationed. Having spent her teenage years growing up in a pastor's family, she experienced first hand the unique challenges that a pastor's family encounters. She was able to not only experience the expectations that are thrust upon pastors' children, some as demanding and unrealistic as they are, but Juliet was also able to witness the dynamic that exists between pastors and their spouses in "traditional" congregations. Her stepmother was a more "traditional" pastor's wife in that she was very active in the laity life of the church—singing in the choir, teaching Sunday school, etc.—and she did not officially share the authority of providing pastoral leadership with Juliet's father.

Having witnessed the more traditional role that a pastor's wife plays in the life of a ministry that is deemed to primarily belong to her husband, Juliet is interested in understanding how the shift that has taken place over the past several years, and continues today, of women joining their husbands in the ranks of pastoral leadership creates a new dynamic for the Christian church. Examining the shift and discovering and defining those factors that make for successful clergy couple ministry is an investigation that Juliet has embraced as being a particularly rich project for her—a second

generational minister who grew up under a traditional form of pastoral leadership, but whose current context is as part of the emerging trend of clergy couples.

Juliet's experience, therefore, of growing up in a traditional pastor's family as compared to her current context of engaging in clergy couple ministry provides the intersection from which her interest in this subject matter stems. The traditional roles that she witnessed her father and stepmother play in the church provided a frame of reference to more thoroughly understand how the growing paradigm of clergy couples is impacting the church today and broadening its more traditional sense of pastoral leadership.

Juliet's context for pursuing this doctoral project is much broader than most. This is because she has not proposed to implement a model or test a particular problem on a specific congregation as most projects do. What she has endeavored to do instead is to investigate the larger context of clergy couple ministry for the purpose of concluding with qualitative insights. Unlike most projects in which the implementation of a model is the crux of the project itself, this project sought to gain insight into an emerging paradigm in lieu of implementing a model. Juliet's context for the sake of the project, then, was the group of clergy couples and their ministries that she studied, from which she gained her insights.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN CLERGY COUPLE MINISTRY/ LITERATURE REVIEW

Because clergy couple ministry is a new and growing phenomenon, not a wealth of literature and information exists on the subject. This is primarily what makes the investigation of this doctoral project such a worthwhile study. More literature exists that focuses specifically on the life, ministry and marriage of couples in which one spouse is a minister, but few deal specifically with the sharing of ministry between couples in which both the husband and wife are ministers—the focus of this doctoral project. The few works that the author did find have emerged only since the 1990s, with the exception of a study on clergy couples that was conducted in the late 1970s.

The ecumenical study was conducted by Nancy Jo von Lackum and John P. von Lackum, III in order to generate a report on the emergence of clergy couple ministry for the groups Professional Church Leadership and National Council of Churches. The report, entitled *A Report on Clergy Couples and the Ecumenical Clergy Couples Consultation,* presented in 1978, declares a noticeable emergence of clergy couple ministry across the decade that precedes the study. "Concomitant with the increase of the number of women in seminary and women clergy, there has been a steady increase over the past ten years in the number of clergy couples, herein defined as those couples who

share the two covenants of marriage and ordination, now available for and practicing a variety of stimulating and creative forms of ministry."[1]The study sought information from twelve different mainline North American denominations. It gained general information to help determine the number of clergy couples in existence during the time and the increase within each denomination. The report also defined the questions and concerns that arise from this emerging paradigm and provided a consultation to help the denominations address the issues. Some further information provided by this report includes a breakdown of the diverse ages and geographical locations of the clergy couples that were reported, along with information on their family status; divorce rate; employment information; their different profiles; the likely reasons why and how they came to be joined together in ministry; and information about denominational sensitivity to their ministries.

After presenting its demographic and profile information, the report affirms clergy couple ministry by stating the specific problems in contemporary culture to which such ministry provides valuable answers. These problems of authority, community, and identity are individually addressed, and then the report shifts to highlight and address the hard issues that arise in response to clergy couple ministry. Finally, the denominations involved in the study provide brief recommendations and resolutions in response to the study.

Although this study was conducted twenty-eight years ago, it provides a worthwhile investigation early on into the noticeable emergence of clergy couple ministry. Although the author of this doctoral project did not find a comparable study that

[1] John P. von Lackum and Nancy Jo von Lackum, "A Report on Clergy Couples and the Ecumenical Clergy Couple Consultation," (n.p., 30 October-2 November, 1978), 1.

has been performed more recently, such a study would certainly be a valuable contribution to ministry.

Another work that examines clergy couples specifically focuses on how the marriages of clergy couples have been impacted since the ordination of women as priests in the Church of England. The study is described in the book *Double Blessing* by Sue Walrond-Skinner. One of the valuable parts of such a study is that in seeking to draw out how clergy marriage has shifted since women's ordination as priests, it addresses also the relationship between marriage and ministry by examining three different types of clergy marriage:

> It was therefore decided that, for the purposes of this study, three main types of clergy marriage would be compared, two of which have emerged since the admission of women to the priesthood: marriages where both partners are priests (joint clergy couples); marriages where the woman but not the man is a priest (women only ordained) and marriages where the man but not the woman is a priest (traditional clergy marriages). The study involved comparing these three types of clergy couples by testing them on two different occasions—once immediately before the ordination of women to the priesthood and again two years later.[2]

This study begins by examining the stories and experiences of some in the first group of women to be ordained by the Church of England in 1994. Then, as a foundation for her study, the author examines the contemporary context of marriage, followed by research into marriage satisfaction, as a means of helping to determine whether the ordination of women as priests is having a positive or negative impact on marriage. She then highlights the personality and developmental characteristics that impact clergypersons and their marital relationships, followed by an examination into the factors that tend to be stressors on clergy marriage in general. After setting these foundations, the

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[2] Sue Walrond-Skinner, *Double Blessing: Clergy Marriage Since the Ordination of Women as Priests* (New York, NY: Mowbray, 1998), 5-6.

author described the study that she conducted of a small sample of clergy couples, and then compared those findings to the other two categories of clergy marriages (those in which the wife only is ordained and those in which the husband only is ordained) to draw her final conclusions as to the impact that women's ordination as priests is having on clergy marriages.

Another work that provides interesting insight into the ministry dynamics of clergy couples is an essay in the book *Send Me? The Itinerancy in Crisis*. The essay is entitled "Married to the Church and to Each Other: Clergy Couples" and was written by a clergy couple to shed light on the challenges to husband/wife team ministry in the itinerate systems of the church, and specifically in the United Methodist Church.[3] In it, Kenneth L. and Lydia J. Waters first pose and address the question of whether clergy couples are a promise or a problem for the itinerate system. They make the case that the perception of clergy couples as a problem arises out of the particular set of issues and challenges that have emerged along side this growing ministry paradigm in the United Methodist church—issues that the denomination has not adequately addressed.

Some of these issues that the authors highlight are the pastoral appointment process, which often places the spouses of a clergy couple in separate ministry contexts; the lack of adequate finances for churches to support having a husband and wife team as their pastors; greater preparation needed for congregations to receive a clergy couple; the need for adequate housing provisions that fit the unique needs of a clergy couple; and the need for more overall support for clergy couple ministry. The authors' call in this essay is for the denomination to realize that it must change and adapt to the contemporary shift in

[3] Kenneth L. Waters and Lydia J. Waters, "Married to the Church and to Each Other: Clergy Couples" in *Send Me? The Itineracy in Crisis*, ed. Donald E. Messer (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 134-146.

pastoral leadership to embrace clergy couple ministry. They believe that the future of the itinerate system and the future growth of vital ministry in the denomination requires the denomination to address the challenges that hinder successful ministry for clergy couples.

A pivotal more recent work that sheds light on the ministry dynamics of husband/wife team ministry is *Unless Two Agree: Working Together in Team Ministry* by Susie C. Owens.[4] Drawing upon her many fruitful years co-pastoring with her husband, Owens uses her experiences to create a reference for clergy couples that gives insight into this relatively new ministry phenomenon. She begins her insights with a message specifically for women in ministry. In this message Owens elaborates on the necessary characteristics that women need in order to deal successfully with the changing demands, responsibilities and expectations that come along with the influx of women assuming greater leadership roles in the church. She then examines the impact that the call to ministry has on women and brings to light some of the challenges with which women called into ministry have to deal.

After addressing women's issues specifically, Owens then provides profiles of several ministry couples who share certain aspects of their personal lives and ministries. Then she uses the rest of the book to address clergy couple issues directly. She addresses the need for each spouse to consider the other's perspective in ministry by looking at ministry through the other's eyes; suggests what is needed to successfully blend marriage and ministry; gives insight into how to discern who should become the "designated head" as the couple labors together in complete unity, mutuality and love; and finally, shares the

[4] Susie C. Owens, *Unless Two Agree: Working Together in Team Ministry* (Dallas, TX: Black Pearl Publishing, 2000).

unique bearing that clergy couple ministry has on the church and gives guidelines for successful ministry.

In addition to the few books devoted to addressing issues of clergy couple ministry, there also exist a limited number of articles that provide insight into the subject matter. Highlighted here are two brief articles found in different editions of *The Christian Ministry*, a Christian periodical that addresses various aspects of ministry. One of the articles is written by a husband/wife team, John and Nancy Rohde, who share their personal experiences of partnering together in ministry. They share the lessons they learned from a period of intense conflict they encountered as they co-pastored. John and Nancy believe that it was the strength of their partnership that allowed them to endure a conflict that would have been too difficult for most pastors, and they share the implications that they believe such a partnership has for churches served by clergy couples.[5]

The second article is written by a woman minister who also shares the experiences of her and her husband's pastoring ministry. Kathleen S. Bostrom, the author, shares the journey that she and her husband took together and the insights they gained about what makes for effective clergy couple team ministry.[6] The insights that Bostrom provides include the need for the ministry couple to be intentional in searching for a congregation that is ready to embrace their shared ministry; the importance of the couple presenting themselves as two separate pastors; and the value in allowing the

[5] Nancy Rohde and John Rohde, "An Adventure in Co-Ministry: Conflict and Affirmation" in *The Christian Ministry* (September-October, 1990): 16-17.

[6] Kathleen S. Bostrom, "Effective Clergy Couples" in *The Christian Ministry* (May-June, 1997): 29-31.

members of the congregation to support and affirm the couple's ministry in a way that encourages others to do the same.

Although the resources regarding clergy couple ministry are limited, the few that do exist are insightful. One of the most insightful aspects of these works is that they bring to light the need for further investigation. They highlight both the challenges and opportunities that this emerging ministry phenomenon poses for the church, and in many ways they validate the need for the type of investigation that the author of this doctoral project sought to complete.

CHAPTER THREE

FOUNDATIONS

In order to have a proper context for examining and understanding the emergence of clergy couple ministry, it is imperative to establish a foundation upon which such an investigation is framed. This chapter seeks to do just that by providing a historical, biblical and theological foundation for this project's study of clergy couple ministry.

Historical Foundation: Historical Perspectives that Have Hindered Women's Equality and Full Participation in Church and Society

The Christian church of today, in which women are progressively gaining their voice and place in its structural leadership and forefronts, has journeyed a great distance toward overcoming an oppressive history—a history that has prevented women from being full participants in the church and society. The distance that remains to be traveled toward women becoming full and equal participants in the church, however, remains great.

The following statement is from the Southern Baptist Convention's 2005 website. It is their official statement regarding the role of women in the church:

> Women participate equally with men in the priesthood of all believers. Their role is crucial, their wisdom, grace and commitment exemplary. Women are an integral part of our Southern Baptist boards, faculties, mission teams, writer pools, and professional staffs. We affirm and celebrate their Great Commission Impact.

> While Scripture teaches that a woman's role is not identical to that of men in every respect, and that pastoral leadership is assigned to men, it also teaches that women are equal in value to men.[1]

Coming from one of the largest Protestant denominations in the United States, this statement speaks volumes in regards to how far the church as a whole has evolved in regards to its acceptance and affirmation of women in church leadership roles. When understanding the historical perspectives that have led to the evolution of the above statement, however, it becomes clear that even today, further progression is needed as women continue to emerge and grow as leaders in the church.

This statement speaks to the progress that the church has attained in its view of the role of women and in its affirmation that women are equal to men and are a vital part of the church. Although it is difficult not to acknowledge such a truth, considering that women make up the overwhelming majority of the church's support base and membership today, such an affirmation is none-the-less a statement of progress. As will be examined in this section, there was a time in history when the very presence of women, let alone their participation in the church, was negatively perceived. The statement also speaks to the need for further progression, however, because while it acknowledges women's equality with men on the one hand, it continues to exclude them from the highest levels of church leadership by refusing them ordination.

In 2005, decades beyond the crux of the women's liberation movement, in a time when women are "gaining" equality with men in the work force, the home front, and other facets of society, it may seem surprising that one of the United States' main-line denominations still maintains that the call to pastoral leadership is reserved for men only.

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[1] *Southern Baptist Convention Website*, available from http://www.sbc.net; Internet; accessed 5 February, 2005.

Perhaps even more surprising is that the denomination seems to have progressed very little over the past two decades in its stance on the role of women. Their stance today in many ways echoes a resolution passed by the convention in 1984, which declared the reason why women should not be ordained to engage in pastoral leadership:

> The proposed resolution said that "Scriptures teach that women are not in public worship to assume a role of authority over men lest confusion reign in the local church" and that Paul "excludes women from pastoral leadership to preserve a submission God requires because man was first in creation and woman was first in the Edenic fall."[2]

The 1984 resolution showed that the view of women and their role in the church was directly tied to views about the role that the first woman, Eve, played in the fall of humanity. Eve's involvement in the fall was viewed as having led to a curse upon her and all women who followed after her.

Although the declaration is decades old, this pattern of using supposed biblical curses to justify oppression of particular groups throughout history is an old practice. As Bill Leonard notes in a response to the 1984 resolution, the resolution is history repeating itself in a stance against women that is similar to the one against Blacks more than a century earlier:

> History repeats itself, at least in the Southern Baptist Convention. That denomination most southern, born of the struggle over slavery, continues to wrestle with the gospel and its implications for human freedom. In 1845 the issue was the gospel and black folk; in 1984 it is the gospel and womenfolk. . . .
>
> In 1845 most Baptists in the South (and many in the North) believed that black people were under an assortment of curses passed down from Cain, Ham or other misbegotten individuals. . . .
>
> Now it's Eve. Southern Baptists, at least the 4,793 of them gathered in Kansas City, cannot forgive Eve. She sinned first,

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[2] Richard Groves, "Conservatives Dominate Southern Baptist Meeting," *The Christian Century* (July 18-25, 1984): 702.

> sinned best, and thus her daughters are forever cursed, cut off from certain benefits of divine grace. . . . Women have "equal dignity" with men and received at Pentecost the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. But they cannot be ordained—because of Eve.[3]

The repeat of history in 1984 obviously still has a bearing on the way women's roles are viewed today. Although the lack of progression in views about women may be more readily apparent in the Southern Baptist Convention, the association of women with Eve's place in the fall maintains its bearing on the Christian church today, across denominational lines. Even among those denominations that do affirm and practice the ordination of women, it is obvious that in-roads have yet to be made in regards to women being fully recognized as co-equals with men in church leadership. What lends credence to this notion is the fact that although the ordination of women has long been affirmed in Methodism, it took until the 21st century for the first woman bishop to be elected in the African Methodist Episcopal church (Bishop Vashti McKenzie), and one still has yet to be elected in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion church.

Views about women and their roles are still evolving in the church today, and the crux of this evolution has to do with addressing the dark cloud that has been cast over women—a cloud that helped lead to the 1984 resolution passed by the Southern Baptist Convention and that still lingers today. This dark cloud, however, certainly was not created in 1984, but has its origins in a history that dates all the way back to men's early interpretations of biblical texts.

The perceptions that women have had to struggle through over the centuries, and continue to overcome today, have their roots in early interpretations of biblical texts, especially of the Creation and Fall stories. These early interpretations shaped the way

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[3] Bill J. Leonard, "Forgiving Eve," *The Christian Century* (November 7, 1984): 1038-1039.

women were viewed and treated, not only in the church, but in society overall. Perhaps the greatest impact on church and society were the interpretations that were set forth by those esteemed to be the early church fathers and doctors of the church.

As can be seen in the second century writings of Tertullian, the man considered to be the founder of Latin Christianity, the prevailing views of women in the church and society stemmed from biblical interpretations that held women in contempt. In his writings, *On the Apparel of Women*, Tertullian states his case for why women should dress most modestly, and he does so in the context of his interpretation of Eve's place in the fall and its consequences on all women. He says:

> The ignominy, I mean, of the first sin, and the odium (attaching to her as the cause) of human perdition. "In pains and in anxieties dost thou bear (children), woman; and toward thine husband (is) thy inclination, and he lords it over thee." And do you not know that you are (each) an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of your lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. *You* are the devil's gateway: *you* are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree: *you* are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. *You* destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of *your* desert—that is, death—even the Son of God had to die.[4]

This view that clearly blamed Eve for the fall of humanity, declaring therefore that all women bear the consequences, led to notions that women needed to be controlled so that they would not cause men to sin any longer, like their foremother, Eve, was blamed for doing. Further along in his writings, *On the Apparel of Women*, Tertullian states in essence that women should dress modestly, without ornamentation or make-up, so as to not lead men to sin because of their beauty:

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[4] Tertullian, *On The Apparel of Women* in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4 (Buffalo: The Christian Literature, 1885), 1.1.

> But why are we a (source of) danger to our neighbour? . . . For that other, as soon as he has felt concupiscence after your beauty, and has mentally already committed (the deed) which his concupiscence pointed to, perishes; and you have been made the sword which destroys him. . . .Are we to paint ourselves out that our neighbors may perish? Where, then, is (the command), "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself?"[5]

Because women were viewed as the source for sin being brought into the world, they were viewed also as needing to be controlled and kept as submissive and hidden as possible. So, Tertullian instructed women to, "Submit your head to your husbands, and you will be enough adorned. Busy your hands with spinning; keep your feet at home; and you will 'please' better than (by arraying yourselves) in gold."[6] In addition, Tertullian also instructed women to be veiled for the sake of men and as a guard against further sin:

> I pray you, be you mother, or sister, or *virgin*-daughter—let me address you according to the names proper to your years—veil your head; if a mother, for your sons' sakes; if a sister, for your brethren's sakes; if a daughter for your fathers' sakes. All ages are periled in your person. Put on the panoply of modesty; surround yourself with the stockade of bashfulness; rear a rampart for your sex, which must neither allow your own eyes egress nor ingress to other people's.[7]

Similar contemptuous views regarding Eve continued in the fourth century, which can be seen in the writings of such early church fathers of Greek Christianity as John Chrysostom and Gregory Nazianzen (Gregory of Nazianzus). William Phipps, in his 1989 book, *Genesis and Gender* quotes the writing of several early church fathers, showing how their misogynistic interpretations of the creation and fall stories led to the debasement of women, who were all viewed as extensions of Eve:

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[5] Ibid., 2.2.

[6] Ibid., 2.13.

[7] Tertullian, *On the Veiling of Virgins* in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4 (Buffalo: The Christian Literature, 1885), 16.

> John Chrysostom (literally, "golden mouth") and Gregory Nazianzen, outstanding fourth-century leaders of Greek Christianity, thought of Eve as an ensnarer. . . . "What else is woman but a foe to friendship, an inescapable punishment, a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic danger, a delectable detriment, an evil of nature, painted with fair colors!" . . . Gregory Nazianzen, Archbishop of Constantinople, interpreted Eve as the devil's advocate: "Instead of an assistant, she became an enemy . . . beguiling the man by means of pleasure."[8]

The perceptions of women as spurred by the thoughts and biblical interpretations of the early church fathers continued throughout the centuries to have a tremendous impact on defining the cultural and societal position of women. Of these early patriarchs, the one who perhaps had the greatest and most lasting impact in this regard is Augustine of Hippo. Noted as the most influential leader in Western Christianity, Augustine's impact on the continuation of early views about women was substantial. Like the other church fathers, Augustine also focused on the role of Eve in the fall to give reason for the subordination of women and to justify their place as those who must be ruled over in society. He interpreted the fall in light of certain Pauline texts that he used for the same purpose—to make his case for women's subjection:

> For we must believe that even before her sin woman had been made to be ruled by her husband and to be submissive and subject to him. But we can with reason understand that the servitude meant in these words is that in which there is a condition similar to that of slavery rather than a bond of love. . . . St. Paul says, *Through love serve one another*. But by no means would he say, "Have dominion over one another." Hence married persons through love can serve one another, but St. Paul does not permit a woman to rule over a man. The sentence pronounced by God gave this power rather to man; and it is not by her nature but rather by her sin that woman deserved to have her husband for a master. But if this order

[8] William Phipps, *Genesis and Gender: Biblical Myths of Sexuality and Their Cultural Impact* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1989), 46-47.

> is not maintained, nature will be corrupted still more, and sin will be increased.[9]

In explaining the fall, Augustine, like the other church fathers mentioned thus far clearly blamed Eve for the origination of sin, and although acknowledging that Adam sinned as well, his sin is also attributed to Eve:

> And we cannot believe that the man was led astray to transgress God's law because he believed that the woman spoke the truth, but that he fell in with her suggestions because they were so closely bound in partnership. In fact, the Apostle was not off the mark when he said, "It was not Adam, but Eve, who was seduced," for what he meant was that Eve accepted the serpent's statement as the truth, while Adam refused to be separated from his only companion, even if it involved sharing her sin.[10]

Augustine seems to be suggesting here that the closeness—the partnership and companionship that Adam shared with Eve—is the reason for Adam's downfall. This way of thinking sheds light on the way men tended to relate to women in society at the time, as well as the roles that women were permitted to play in society. Attributing the companionship and partnership between men and women to the cause for man's downfall speaks volumes about why women were kept in a place of subordination to men rather than as partners on the same plane.

This notion that the tight-knit companionship shared between Adam and Eve caused man's sin seemed to influence much of Augustine's thinking about men and women's relationships. He instructs his fellow brothers to "watch out that she does not twist and overturn you for the worse. What difference does it make whether it is in a wife

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[9] Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* in *Ancient Christian Writers*, vol. 2 (Westminster, MD: The Newman Bookshop, 1946), 11.37.50.

[10] Augustine, *City of God* (New York: Hafner, 1948), 14.13.11.

or in a mother, provided that we nonetheless avoid Eve in any woman?"[11] Whether wife or mother, women were portrayed as possessing a sort of "voodoo" that men must watch out for and stay clear of. Certainly this notion did not promote a sense of mutuality and cooperation between men and women, but instead only lent credence to the notion that women must be controlled and ruled over. Although Augustine acknowledged that before the fall "between man and wife there was a faithful partnership based on love and mutual respect,"[12] the greater message that resounds in his writings is that this partnership ended in Eve's subordination, since she was the one who fell and brought Adam down with her.

The views about women as portrayed by the early church fathers provided the foundation for the centuries of similar and even more hostile thinking that followed. Phipps notes that contempt for women continued from the early church fathers to the Middle Ages:

> The misogyny of the church fathers encouraged even more exaggerated contempt for women in the Middle Ages. In Ireland this testimony circulated: 'I am Eve, the wife of noble Adam; . . . It was I who robbed my children of heaven; it is I by right who should have been crucified. . . . There would be no hell, there would be no grief, there would be no terror but for me.' *Mystere d'Adam*, one of the earliest morality plays, depicts Eve as lacking a conscience. Adam is unable to convince her that the Devil is treacherous. Although vexed at his wife's eating the forbidden fruit, her persistent nagging causes him to capitulate to her offer.[13]

The thoughts about women that carried from the church fathers and were elaborated on throughout the Middle Ages only deepened the idea that a sense of true partnership between man and woman was wiped out by the fall.

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[11] Augustine, *Letters* in *The Works of Saint Augustine* (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1990), 243.

[12] Ibid., *City of God* 14.26.

[13] Phipps, *Genesis and Gender*, 60.

In addition, a common notion of the time was that women were really useful only for procreation, and therefore, could not be helpful for anything else. Thomas Aquinas wrote, "Moreover, we are told that woman was made to be a help to man (Gen. 2:18, 20). But she was not fitted to help man except in generation, because another man would have proved a more effective help in anything else."[14] Furthermore, Aquinas agreed with earlier philosophers that the nature of woman is defective, but he contends that she is included in the first production of creation anyhow for the purpose of procreation:

> As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active force in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex; while the production of woman comes from defect in the active force or from some material indisposition, or even from some external influence; such as that of a south wind, which is moist . . . On the other hand, as regards human nature in general, woman is not misbegotten, but is included in nature's intention as directed to the work of generation.[15]

With the ideas prevailing that women are defective and were only created to procreate, and that man's close partnership and companionship with woman was the cause of his fall, it is clear how these perspectives greatly hindered women from being treated as co-equals in society in general, let alone in the church.

Phipps notes that those in the church who launched the largest attack on women were Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, theology professors appointed by Pope Innocent VIII as a force against alleged witches in 1484. The title of their work, *The Hammer Against Witches*, a "work of quintessential misogyny," became the foremost

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[14] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, vol.1 (New York: Benziger Bros., 1947), 98.2.

[15] Ibid., 92.1.

authority for the witch-hunt frenzy that was characteristic of the period.[16] Women were the ones who were the primary targets of the medieval witch-hunts, for writings such as the one put out by Kramer and Sprenger made women the culprits that had to be destroyed. "The book provided the rationalization for torturing and executing many thousands of women."[17]

In the book itself, Kramer and Sprenger pose the question of why there is a greater number of witches among women than men, and then gives their abusive response that to them answers the question:

> All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable. . . . There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, a fourth thing which says not, it is enough; that is, the mouth of the womb. Wherefore for the sake of fulfilling their lusts they consort even with devils. More such reasons could be brought forward, but to the understanding it is sufficiently clear that it is no matter for wonder that there are more women than men found infected with the heresy of witchcraft.[18]

This focus on hammering out witches, led by Catholicism in the fifteenth century, became rampant in the Protestant church of the two subsequent centuries of the Reformation. Phipps notes the work of Presbyterian reformer, John Knox, who wrote a piece that was directed against any woman, whether of high or low status in society, who was independent. Entitled *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regime of Women*, in this piece "Knox denounced reigning queens and alleged witches" and outright declared to women that because they brought mankind under Satan's bondage,

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[16] Phipps, *Genesis and Gender*, 61.

[17] Ibid., 62.

[18] Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *The Hammer Against Witches* (London: Folio Society, 1968), 29.

their entire person—body, will and desires—will be under the control of their man.[19]

The Rise of Feminist and Womanist Consciousness

It is easy to understand how the early view that debased women and sought to subordinate them greatly hindered women from being thought of and treated as co-equals in society and in the church. As these views traveled down from one century to another, part of women's subordination was that as a whole they were not permitted to have their own voice. The history that portrays women, therefore, is overwhelmingly male dominating and void of women's true experiences and sense of self.

It was not until the nineteenth century that a considerable shift occurred which gave rise to feminist consciousness and a noticeable women's movement in the Western world took place. As she puts the rise of feminist consciousness into historical perspective, Barbara Brown Zikmund notes:

> Until the early nineteenth century, most intellectual and theological work was done out of a prefeminist perspective. There was no conscious awareness that women's experience, as women's experience, was relevant to intellectual work. It was a man's world. Women were part of the male story. As women they remained invisible.[20]

During this time women began to express that their experiences and self-consciousness were important enough to be valued and articulated through their own perspectives. They began to make their own cases for change in both society and the church. Part of their case for change undoubtedly involved countering the biblical interpretations that kept them in bondage for so long:

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[19] Phipps, *Genesis and Gender*, 62.

[20] Barbara Brown Zikmund, "Feminist Consciousness in Historical Perspective," in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Letty Russell (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), 21-22.

> By the 1830s and 1840s, many women in America saw the need for different understandings of biblical material. Sarah Grimke, noted antislavery lecturer and women's rights author, charged that the masculine bias of biblical interpretation was part of a deliberate plot against women. In 1837 she called for new feminist scholarship. A few years later, Antoinette Brown, one of the first women to study theology at Oberlin College, examined Paul's epistles with feminist questions. At her ordination in 1853 (she was the first ordained woman in Congregationalism), the preacher, the Rev. Luther Lee, noted that Paul promised new gifts of the Spirit to men and women alike. He discounted some of Paul's specific admonitions against women and quoted from Galatians. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). A rising feminist consciousness called for discrimination between those parts of the Bible that were essential and those that were culturally relative.[21]

One of the most influential leaders in the emergence of the nineteenth century women's rights movement was Elizabeth Cady Stanton. In the Editor's Preface of the work that Stanton is most noted for, *The Women's Bible*, appears a quote from her "Declaration of Sentiments," a piece she had written for the first Women's Rights Convention in 1848. Stanton writes:

> We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. . . .The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having its direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.[22]

In her declaration Stanton provided a list of eighteen grievances that men had committed against women. Because this declaration was written forty-seven years before the Woman's Bible was published, it shows the scope of her activism for denouncing the

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[21] Ibid., 23.

[22] Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Women's Bible*, ed. Eleanor Bilimoria, (Seattle: Coalition Task Force on Women and Religion, 1974), vi.

legacy of oppression against women. Two of the grievances she voiced were as follows: In the first she says, "He [man] allows her in Church, as well as State, but a subordinate position, claiming Apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the Church." In the second she says, "He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and to her God." Stanton is also quoted in this preface by the editor as saying, "When those who are opposed to all reforms can find no other argument, their last resort is the Bible. It has been interpreted to favor intemperance, slavery, capital punishment and the subjection of women."[23]

It was primarily because of these injustices against women and the fact that the Bible was used as the primary source of the injustice that led Stanton to head a "Revising Committee" of twenty women, including herself, to write the Woman's Bible. This work, published in 1898, sought to examine Scriptures that were classically used to ridicule and oppress women and correct their interpretations to help liberate women. She writes, "The object is to revise only those texts and chapters directly referring to women, and those also in which women are made prominent by exclusion."[24] In the introduction to the Woman's Bible, Stanton states her case for why such a work is necessary:

> From the inauguration of the movement for Woman's emancipation the Bible has been used to hold her in the "divinely ordained sphere," prescribed in the Old and New Testaments.
>
> The canon and civil law; church and state; priests and legislators; all political parties and religious denominations have alike taught that woman was made after man, of man, and for man, an inferior

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., 5.

> being, subject to man. Creeds, codes, Scriptures and statutes, are all based on this idea. The fashions, forms, ceremonies and customs of society, church ordinances and disciplines all grow out of this idea.[25]

Along with a feminist consciousness that grew out of the literary works of such activists as Grimke, Brown, and Stanton and her Committee, another critical factor that contributed to the spread of the nineteenth century women's movement, particularly in the United States, was the involvement of laywomen in the church. Rosemary Skinner Keller acknowledges the force that lay women were in the advancement of the movement:

> Entrance of women into lay leadership decisively changed the status and role of females in Protestant churches during the nineteenth century. These gains began after the Civil War in the 1870s, when women were being denied ordination in many of the same denominations.
>
> Lay leadership by women did not begin in established church structures. . . .
>
> Expanded roles and power for females came through the creation of organizations "for women only," particularly home and foreign missionary societies and deaconess orders.[26]

Such women's organizations eventually led to women being included into the official structures of the church, like the creation of the stewardess position in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church in 1868. The stewardesses were assistants to the ordained clergymen. These women's organizations were a tremendously vital part of the women's rights movement, and although its opponents hoped the movement would die out, instead of dying out "women's organizations grew and flourished, setting the foundation for wider voluntary and professional activity by lay women in the twentieth

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[25] Ibid., 7.

[26] Rosemary Skinner Keller, "Lay Women in the Protestant Tradition," in *Women and Religion in America*, vol. 1 (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 242.

century."[27]

As would be expected due to centuries of misogynistic views and portrayals of women, sharp opposition met much of the nineteenth century women's movement. The movement "was very upsetting to many people. Opponents of the women's rights movement used the Bible to argue that it was not legitimate for women to name or value their female experience."[28] Such perspectives continued to hinder women from being viewed and treated as co-equals with men in society and the church throughout the nineteenth century. The feminist consciousness and women's involvement in society and church that were characteristic of the women's movement continued to grow in the twentieth century, however, despite its opposition.

While feminist consciousness was emerging in the United States, along side it womanist consciousness was also emerging. Whereas the feminist consciousness of White women grew out of a context of male dominance and superiority, a similar consciousness for Black women grew out of an oppressive context that was two-fold. As ethicist and womanist, Katie Canon, points out, "Throughout the history of the United States, the interrelationship of White supremacy and male superiority has characterized the Black woman's reality as a situation of struggle—a struggle to survive in two contradictory worlds simultaneously, one White, privileged, and oppressive, the other Black, exploited, and oppressed."[29]

The historical context of Black women differed from that of their White female counterparts primarily in that the Black woman's context included the direct lived

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[27] Ibid., 252.

[28] Zikmund, "Feminist Consciousness," 22.

[29] Katie Geneva Canon, *Katie's Canon* (New York: The Continuum, 1995), 47.

experience of slavery's horror. Not only was the Black woman debased, dehumanized and horrifyingly abused because she was a woman, but also because she was Black in America—a slave. Like White women, who had the Bible used as a weapon of subordination and oppression against them, Black women also experienced this theological bashing, but on a much greater scale. The Bible was used against Black women because they were female, but even more so because they were Black. Canon notes:

> The Black woman's consciousness in the first two centuries of the American colonies' existence focused on identifying resources that would help her sustain the inescapable theological attacks—either Black people were human beings and could not be property, or they were property and something less than human. . . . All of life was graded according to an elaborate hierarchy, inherited from the Middle Ages, known as the "great chain of being." Blacks were assigned a fixed place as an inferior species of humanity. The common property of White culture included certain preconceptions about the irredeemable nature of Black women and Black men as "beings of an inferior order," a species between animal and human. Unwavering faith in God provided Black Christians with patience and perseverance in the ongoing struggle for survival.[30]

Because of their two-fold realities of severe oppression, as a feminist consciousness for Black women emerged, Black women's struggle for justice differed from that of White women. Whereas White women's struggle for justice was for their liberation as women, Black women's struggle for justice was first for their liberation as Blacks. Even after the emancipation of slavery, the incredible oppression that Blacks continued to experience was especially horrifying for Black women:

> The Black woman began her life of freedom with no vote, no protection, and no equity of any sort. . . . Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Black women were severely restricted to the most unskilled, poorly paid, menial work.

[30] Ibid., 50.

> Virtually no Black woman held a job beyond that of domestic servant or field hand. Keeping house, farming, and bearing and rearing children continued to dominate all aspects of the Black woman's life. . . . As Jeanne noble describes it, "While freedom brought new opportunities for black men, for most women it augmented old problems." After emancipation, racism and male supremacy continued to intersect patriarchal and capitalist structures in definitive ways.[31]

Although their struggle as women was incredible and very real, overcoming their struggle as Blacks was the heart of Black women's focus during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Black women viewed their struggle as reaching beyond themselves as women and engulfing their men and their children—their entire community. The struggle for freedom from that which blatantly plagued their entire Black community is what drove the focus of Black women and their faith. "The religious consciousness of the Black freedwoman focused on 'uplifting' the Black community. . . . It was biblical faith grounded in the prophetic tradition that helped Black women devise strategies and tactics to make Black people less susceptible to the indignities and proscriptions of an oppressive White social order."[32]

This focus on the betterment of the entire community is at the heart of womanist consciousness. In her book, *If It Wasn't For the Women*, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes notes that the term "womanist" was introduced in 1982 by renowned author, Alice Walker. Although a contemporary term, "womanist" as defined by Walker is rooted in the history of Black women's experiences in the context of community:

> Walker's definition asserts the existence of a black women's culture that values not only women and women's relationships but the men and the "entire community male and female." Walker identifies a fundamental commitment to the "survival and

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[31] Ibid., 51.

[32] Ibid., 51-52.

> wholeness" of this community as a hallmark of this womanist idea. Walker begins by stating that a womanist is a "black feminist."[33]

The emergence of a Black feminist consciousness, which came later to be known as "womanist" consciousness, with its focus on the liberation of the entire Black community, drew tremendous strength from and added tremendous strength to the Black church during slavery and after emancipation. As their White female counterparts sought women's liberation during the women's movement of the nineteenth century, Black women during the same time joined Black men in seeking liberation from the racism that kept their entire communities in bondage. The struggle for liberation was fought in the context of community, and the crux of the Black community was the Black church.

For Black women during this time, the Black church was the primary institution that enabled them to make significant contributions to their church and communities. As she elaborates on the community connection that Blacks maintained during slavery, Gilkes writes:

> Women's roles in religious and cultural socialization led to their participation as leaders for the entire community. . . .
> The church was an important broker in enabling black people to resolve the pain and stress of death and disruption. The "invisible institution" was open to the participation of women as religious leaders. Toni Morrison, in her recent book *Beloved*, builds on this tradition in her characterization of "Baby Suggs holy"—inspired by Margaret Garner's mother-in-law, an antebellum preacher or "professor of religion." According to other historians, black women played prominent roles in the organizational establishment and cultural maintenance of churches.[34]

In her book *Daughters of Thunder*, Bettye Collier-Thomas remembers and affirms the incredible contributions of Black women who, like the *Beloved* character, powerfully

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[33] Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, *If It Wasn't For the Women* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 10.

[34] Ibid., 34

preached as messengers called of God during and after slavery. Collier-Thomas acknowledges that there were more than twenty Black women preachers who were known in the nineteenth century. Because of the lack of substantive documentation, however, only few of their sermons survived. The four of the twenty known preachers whose sermons survived are Julia A. J. Foote, Harriet Baker, Mary J. Small, and Florence Spearing Randolph.[35] The recapturing of these women's stories and preaching voices greatly illuminates the rich history of Black women in the church:

> Not only did they open doors in the ministry that had been closed to women of all races, but they also represented the best of the African American preaching tradition, providing their audience with spiritual and practical tools for living in and fighting against a chaotic and unjust society. As these women struggled to follow God's call to preach, they taught by example as well as by their words how to negotiate the reality of what the world is with the Christian vision of what the world should be: a world that reflects God's justice and love.[36]

Gilkes notes that the prominent public roles that Black women maintained in their communities during slavery continued even after emancipation, and the impact of that female network continues to be an important force today. Part of the reason for this lasting impact was the development of a network of women's organizations. Similar to how White women developed their own associations during the women's movement, Black women also mobilized into strong organizations inside and outside the church. Over a period from 1895 to 1935, Black women worked together to develop organizations that provided vital community leadership nationally and locally.[37] Two of

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[35] Bettye Collier-Thomas, *Daughters of Thunder* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 41.

[36] Ibid., 8.

[37] Gilkes, *If It Wasn't For the Women,* 35-36.

these organizations that had a tremendous impact on the social and political life of the Black community were the National Federation of African American Women, made up of eighty-five groups scattered throughout the country, and the National Association of Colored Women.[38]

It is important to note, however, that although the "invisible church" during the time of slavery was open to women's participation as leaders, and although the development of strong women's organizations after emancipation was critical for the Black community, as the Black church became formally institutionalized Black women were met with sexism that hindered them from participating as co-equals with men in the church. Black women felt this sting of sexism during the same time that they were growing strong in the development of their women's organizations. Gilkes notes:

> The emergence of the black women's club movement coincided with the very sexist assault on female leadership within black churches and what Evelyn Brooks Barnett describes as black Baptist women's loss of the battle over the pulpit. Not only did church women use their women's clubs to carry on leadership roles outside the confines of their churches, but they also formed autonomous and highly elaborate women's organizations within their churches. For these women, the development of acculturated grassroots leadership was a principal task.[39]

As they fought for liberation of their Black communities from racism, the sexism that confronted Black women caused them to also strengthen their fight for women's rights. This struggle was particularly noteworthy in the Black Baptist churches of the time. Evelyn Higginbotham, in her historical account of the women's movement in the Black Baptist church during the era, notes:

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[38] Emilie M. Townes, *In A Blaze of Glory* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 40.

[39] Gilkes, *If It Wasn't For the Women,* 37.

> Women members of the male-dominated American National Baptist Convention, forerunner of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., were the first to question the illusory unity of the convention as the voice of all its people. Within the national body, Virginia Broughton of Tennessee and Mary Cook and Lucy Wilmot Smith of Kentucky were the most vocal in defense of women's rights. Broughton, Cook, and Smith were active in organizing separate Baptist women's conventions in the face of varying levels of male support and hostility. They spoke for an expanding public of women who stood in opposition to exclusive male power and dominance.[40]

In addition to these women, another prominent figure in the Black Baptist church was Nannie Helen Burroughs, who led the way for "Women's Day" to be recognized in Black churches across denominational lines. Burroughs also provided training for Black women to be public speakers so that on "Women's Day" women would be equipped to speak for themselves.[41]

The efforts of women like Broughton, Cook, Smith, and Burroughs showed that Black women were determined to find a way to advance their cause for justice despite the odds. Their impact has remained down through the generations and has paved the way for the advancement of women in church leadership today. Particularly during Black women's struggle for liberation, both for themselves and for their Black communities, a womanist consciousness emerged out of their unique context that continues to inform and under gird the advancement of womanist thinking today. As Townes notes, "Contemporary womanist spirituality evolves from the nineteenth-century moral reform and Black women's club movements. It is a spirituality rooted in community and

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[40] Evelyn Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 124.

[41] Gilkes, *If It Wasn't For the Women,* 33, 37.

concerned for the individual."[42]

The growth of feminist and womanist perspectives throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have led to thorough contemporary outlooks that continue the work of liberating women in church and society today. These perspectives have become major voices of liberation across the critical fields of hermeneutics, ethics, theology, and others. As they have evolved over the years, Feminism and Womanism have gone through various stages of development, and continue to evolve today as they tear down the hindrances that have historically kept women from being viewed and treated as co-equals with men in church and society. As they are most capable sources for developing both a biblical hermeneutic and a theology of liberation for women still today, womanist and feminist perspectives will guide the remaining biblical and theological foundation chapters of this dissertation.

Biblical Foundation: Biblical Interpretations that Liberate Women to be Full Participants With Men in Church Leadership

As clearly portrayed in an examination of historical perspectives about women, the oppression and misrepresentation that have kept them from full participation in the work of God have been enforced primarily through patriarchal and androcentric interpretations of select biblical passages. Due to this reality, critical starting places in liberating women to take their place as co-equals with men in the work of the Kingdom are these passages themselves.

Throughout the centuries of Christian history the voice and self-representation of women have been largely ignored and suppressed. It is vital, therefore, that biblical

[42] Townes, *Blaze of Glory,* 43.

interpretations that intend to be liberating for women reclaim the missing voice and perspectives of women. Those scriptural passages that have been interpreted as hostile toward women and have been used to keep women trapped into particular submissive roles in the church and society must be re-interpreted from a liberating perspective in which the portrayals of women are reconstructed.

To achieve such a liberating perspective that has integrity to stand successfully against traditionally oppressive perspectives requires a clear understanding of one's hermeneutical position. Feminist and womanist biblical interpretations are centered in a hermeneutical framework that paves the way for such liberating perspectives of women to be developed. Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza explains the feminist focus of interpretation as she says:

> Feminist biblical interpretation makes explicit that divine truth and revelatory presence are found among women, who are the invisible members of the people of God. It makes explicit that the receivers and proclaimers of revelation are not solely men but also women. It thus seeks to interrupt the theological silence and ecclesial invisibility of women so that God's grace and truth may be revealed among us in their faithfulness.
>
> The critical rereading of the Bible in a feminist key and from women's perspectives is in the process of uncovering lost traditions and correcting mistranslations, of peeling away layers of androcentric scholarship and rediscovering new dimensions of biblical symbols and theological meanings.[43]

Although there are some distinct differences in womanist approaches to biblical interpretation in comparison to feminist approaches, in many ways the aim of the two are very similar. Delores Williams says in regards to womanist interpretation:

> Womanist hermeneutics must take seriously the assumption that the Bible is a male story populated by human males, divine males, divine male emissaries and human women mostly servicing male

[43] Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 1.

> goals, whether social, political, cultural or religious. Thus, when they probe the Bible for meanings relevant to African-American women's experience and faith, contemporary womanists engage a hermeneutical posture of suspicion, just as their feminist sisters do.[44]

In approaching biblical traditions form a posture of suspicion to peel away the many layers of androcentric scholarship, an understanding of one's stance on biblical authority and how biblical traditions must be handled is critical. Fiorenza highlights this importance as she says:

> A hermeneutical understanding that is oriented toward an actualizing continuation of biblical history, as well as toward a critical evaluation of it, must uncover and denounce biblical traditions and theologies that perpetuate violence, alienation, and oppression. At the same time, a critical hermeneutics must also delineate those biblical traditions that bring forward the liberating experiences and visions of the people of God. . . .
> . . . only the nonsexist and nonpartriarchal traditions of the Bible and the nonoppressive traditions of biblical interpretation have the theological authority of revelation if the Bible is not to continue as a tool for the oppression of women. The advocacy stance demands that oppressive and destructive biblical traditions not be granted their claim to truth and authority today. Nor did they have a valid claim at any point in history. . . . A critical feminist hermeneutics must rediscover those biblical traditions and interpretations that have transcended their oppressive cultural contexts even though they are embedded in patriarchal culture.[45]

This approach to biblical interpretation provides the foundation of this chapter. This chapter gives a liberated interpretation of select biblical passages that have been traditionally used to hinder women's equality and full participation in the church. In addition, these passages are interpreted against the backdrop of the larger claim of the Gospel, which has been traditionally ignored in its affirmation of equal women's

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[44] Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 187-188.

[45] Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone*, 60-61.

presence and authority with men in the work of God's Kingdom. The six hermeneutical principles that govern this approach to biblical interpretation, as articulated by Judy Brown are:

> [1] Scripture interprets Scripture. The very same principle must be used with passages regarding women; the whole of Scripture must be used to interpret any one part of Scripture. . . .
> . . . [2] Universal truths are sometimes "wrapped" in details that pertain only to certain circumstances and/or certain cultures. . . . The truth is changeless, but the situational details, . . . may be quite changeable. . . .
> . . . [3] In understanding a passage of Scripture, particularly one that seems to contain details foreign to our day and way of life, it is helpful to apply as much knowledge of the historical setting as possible. When and to whom was the material written? Who is thought to be the human author? Was there a special reason for the writing, a certain problem or event or purpose associated with the writing? . . .
> [4] Not only should a passage be understood in light of its cultural and historical settings but also in light of various literary details. . .
> . . . [5] The student of God's Word must not impose his (*or her*) personal bias upon the reading of a passage. . . .
> . . . [6] There is a progressiveness that characterizes scriptural revelation, and individual passages must be understood according to that progression. The unfolding of God's plan for humankind moves from creation, through the tragedy of the fall, through the period of the law, to redemption. Without having to be overly dispensational, it is necessary to interpret any one passage of Scripture according to its frame of reference, according to its place in the overall picture.[46]

Genesis 1:26-28, 2:7-25 (The Creation Story)

As Israelite history is very expansive, spanning thousands of years, it can be divided into three distinct periods: "the time before the monarchy (pre-1000 B.C.E.); the time when kings ruled (1000 B.C.E.-586 B.C.E.); and postmonarchic times (586 B.C.E.

[46] Judy Brown, *Women Ministers According to Scripture* (Kearney, NE: Morris, 1996), 12-15.

on).”[47] The stories of Genesis obviously fall into the premonarchic period. The biblical texts of this expansive history reveal that the ways in which Israelites lived and expressed their culture are considerably varied throughout its history.[48] In essence, this history evolves from the account of creation, during which God calls all things into being, creates everything from nothing, and establishes God’s order for creation.

Through the centuries, as the story of creation was maintained and the overall message of God’s interaction with God’s people evolved into the ancestral accounts that would follow, these stories became the foundation for Israelite religion and the centuries later Christian movement. How the creation account has been interpreted throughout Christian history, however, has usually not portrayed women in a favorable light; but a liberated interpretation sheds a different light.

The two critical issues to address in the creation account of Gen. 1:26-28 involve both man and woman being created in the image of God and both being given the charge of procreation and dominion. Gen. 1:26 says, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness . . .’” Here the word for “man,” “adam” in Hebrew, is a collective, generic common noun that is used to refer to humanity in general. This is why in English translations the proper name “Adam” is not seen in this verse. The intended understanding of “man” (“adam”) in this verse as well as several other verses in the creation story, therefore, is “mankind” or “humanity,” including both male and female. This notion is strengthened further by the rest of the verse which says, “and let *them* rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth and

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[47] Susan Niditch, “Genesis,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary,* ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon Ringe, expanded ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 13.

[48] Ibid.

over all the creatures that move along the ground." The case is strengthened even more in Gen.1:27 where the plural is used again, "male and female he created *them*."[49]

Understanding that "man" in Gen. 1:26 refers to humanity in general, which includes men and women, is important, for it concludes that both were equally created in the image and likeness of God. Judy Brown continues by saying:

> The biblical account does not differentiate in any way; in whatever way Adam bore the image of God, Eve bore the image of God. Everything that scholars say about the specialness of man, his intellectual and spiritual capacities, the fact that he represents the crowning achievement of God's creative activities—all of it is equally applicable to woman. The biblical writer gives absolutely no reason to think otherwise. Male and female together constitute the "humanity" that was made in the image of God.[50]

In Gen. 1:28 God instructed the male and female that God created to, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." The Hebrew text for these instructions is written in the plural, suggesting that God is instructing both the male and the female to do these things. Both, therefore, are told to increase in number (procreation) and both are told to rule. Neither is given a greater claim to one task over the other:

> There is not the slightest suggestion that the woman was left more responsible for "filling" and the man was left more responsible for ruling; both were assigned the same two roles. Not only is there no hint of a division of duties, there is no suggestion of a distinction in rank. The passage portrays an original creation that was characterized by partnership, not hierarchy, by a perfect equality of the sexes.
>
> It is particularly noteworthy that Adam and Eve were both commissioned to have dominion over the earth, a most authoritative assignment. They were both empowered to act as

[49] Brown, *Women Ministers*, 17-18.

[50] Ibid., 18.

> God's viceroys over all of creation. They shared equally in the dignity of being made in God's image; consequently, they shared equally in exercising leadership over God's handiwork. Eve's "proper place" was not restricted to the home but was extended to all of creation in a ruling capacity.[51]

Such an interpretation of this passage is most affirming of the notion that God's intent in creating man and woman was to set them on equal planes, in a partnership that allowed both to mutually participate in the plan and purpose of God.

The very affirming previous passage has often been overshadowed, however, by how the second creation story, found in chapter two, has traditionally been interpreted. The first issue of importance to address here is that man is said to be created first (Gen. 2:7) and woman is then created from the rib of man (Gen. 2:21-22). Although the language that follows in verses 23-24, in which Adam calls the woman that God created "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh . . ." and says that a man will be united with his wife to become one flesh, suggests a great sense of closeness, intimacy and companionship between the two, this passage is often viewed from an opposing perspective. A long history of Jewish and Christian traditions has attributed woman's creation after Adam and from his rib to her secondary lower status.[52] Some attempt to make the case that since man was created first, this represents God's intended order in society, where man is supposed to be over the woman. As Brown notes, however, "Nothing in the text suggests this conclusion; it is arrived at as a result of exercising logic (or lack thereof) and of applying (or misapplying) other Old Testament texts." She

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[51] Ibid., 23.

[52] Niditch, "Genesis," 16.

explains that such an argument is quickly broken down because the idea that first is best is "arbitrary and invented."[53]

The second issue that is important to address is that woman was created as a "suitable helper" for Adam who was lacking one (Gen. 2:18, 20). A problem arises when it is automatically assumed that as a helper the woman is to be subservient to the man. This is particularly a problem when it is suggested that Eve's charge to be a helper to Adam was God placing her in a servant-like role, because the original language of the text does not at all support this idea. The Hebrew word for "helper" is *ezer*, which in no way automatically denotes subordination. As Victor Hamilton states, "Any suggestion that this particular word denotes one who has only an associate or subordinate status to a senior member is refuted by the fact that most frequently this same word describes Yahweh's relationship to Israel. He is Israel's help(er) because he is the stronger one."[54]

Jane Brown echoes this notion by saying, "[Ezer] appears 19 other times in the Old Testament . . . 15 times of God helping His people . . . one time of God providing help to His people through David . . . and three times of military powers giving help to Israel. . . . In all three categories of use, the one doing the helping is equal to or superior to the one receiving the help. . . . There are no instances in all of the Old Testament of the word being used of a subordinate or an inferior doing the helping."[55] So, although many traditional views of this second creation account have attempted to justify the subordination of women, such an attempt is not legitimate. Just as the first creation

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[53] Brown, *Women Ministers,* 24.

[54] Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 175-176.

[55] Brown, *Women Ministers,* 27-28.

account affirms women's equality, being that God created woman in God's image and gave her dominion alongside man, the second account also affirms equality, being that God created woman to be a needed partner who is as strong a contributor to God's plan as man.

Genesis 3 (The Fall Account)

As expounded upon earlier, the history of oppression against women that continued down throughout the centuries was most often fueled by man's use of select biblical passages. The fall account in Genesis 3 is one of the passages that was used the most. The interpretations of this passage by the early church fathers often produced hostile views of women, where women were portrayed as being the spawn of their cursed mother Eve who was blamed as the primary cause of sin being brought into God's perfect creation. Such views remained and evolved through the centuries of Christian history that followed, producing restrictive, oppressive, and often times abusive conditions for women both in society and in the church.

In order to arrive at a liberated perspective of the fall story, one that focuses less on blaming one party over the other and establishes the much more critical issue as the seriousness of sin and the need for redemption because of sin's consequences, there are two critical issues that must be addressed. The first deals with who takes responsibility for the fall and the second deals with the consequences of the fall. In regards to the issue of who takes responsibility for the fall, although Eve has been traditionally blamed as the primary culprit, the text's author seems to suggest that the responsibility is shared:

> What the author of Genesis does reveal is that man and woman share responsibility for the alteration of their status. The man's

> self-defense, like his passive act of disobedience, portrays him in a childlike manner. When accused by God of defying his order, the man says comically, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate" (3:12).Whose fault is it? The woman's? God's? And yet the woman initiates the act. It is she who first dares to eat of God's tree. . . .[56]

Understanding the shared responsibility between Adam and Eve for their sin is critical because its reality helps to shift the focus of men and women away from the trivial to the much more critical issue of faith. The issue of critical importance is not who is more responsible than the other and who should be blamed more than the other. The critical issue of faith is understanding that all are sinners, both men and women, in need of God's grace that leads to redemption. The critical issue is the seriousness of sin and its implications for humanity's relationship with God:

> At Satan's prompting, humanity chose to dethrone God and enthrone themselves, the very sin that was so familiar to Satan. The temptation began with the suggestion that sin, disobeying God, would not have negative results but positive results. How amazing that a lie so old has been so effective throughout human history. The intimation was that God was withholding from Adam and Eve something good which they could and should secure for themselves. It would, of course, require them to follow their wisdom instead of God's words. And in deciding to do so, in deciding that they knew better than God, they attempted to replace Him with themselves.[57]

At this point attention must be given to the issue of the consequences that resulted from man's and woman's sin. In Gen. 3:16-19, God pronounced how life would change as a result of their disobedience. The point that is made clear from these verses is that sin

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[56] Niditch, "Genesis," 17.

[57] Brown, *Women Ministers,* 35.

has its consequences—"that sin and disobedience do not go unchecked and unchallenged."[58]

A proper perspective of the consequences of the fall is vitally important, not so much for its isolated theological significance, but because it points toward another critical issue of faith—redemption. The issue of critical importance for Christian faith is not the consequences themselves, but the need that the consequences produced for a redemptive plan and purpose of God that has the power to fully restore humanity. One must be careful, therefore, not to deter the importance of redemption by suggesting that the consequences of sin are the desire of God. Much like how a focus on who is more responsible for the fall detracts from the critical faith issue of all being sinners in need of God's saving grace, so also does a primary focus on the consequences of the fall detract from the critical faith issue of God's original intent being restored in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. The consequences of the fall are not representative of God's desire, but the far more critical issue of redemption is representative:

> Genesis 3:16-19 should not be put before the church as God's desire for men and women. Every detail in the passage is as far from God's desire as it can be. The passage is a listing of sin's results, not God's desires. . . . He sent His own Son to make the difference, to change life from what it will be as a result of sin to what He wants it to be as a result of returning Him to the throne. . .
>
> The same Son of God who came to earth to reverse the death of Genesis 3 also came to reverse the sexual chaos of Genesis 3. Male dominance is just as antithetical to God's original, ideal plan as is human death; both are the result of sin, not the desire of God. Jesus came to reverse sin's consequences, not to reinforce them![59]

Brown continues this important notion by saying, "The complete and final reversal of sin's consequences will not be possible until the 'prince of this world' is

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[58] Hamilton, *Book of Genesis,* 201.

[59] Ibid., 36.

driven out by the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; but until that great victory, surely Christians should be able to discern the male-female relationships that God desires from those sin causes."[60] The essence of Genesis 3, therefore, is certainly not that as Christians await the great day of victory they should strive to live according to the consequential hierarchical pattern that underlies the results of sin. The essence of this passage is to pronounce the seriousness of sin's effect on the Divine/human relationship and to establish the fall as the need for Jesus Christ. Because of the fall's consequences, all of humanity stands in need of a Savior, and that Savior has come with redeeming power in Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 14: 34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15
Reinterpreting the Uses of Pauline Texts in the Case Against Women in Ministry

1 Cor. 14:34-35 and 1 Tim. 2:11-15 are two of the Pauline passages most often used by traditionalists to make a case against the full participation of women in ministry. Most often, however, these verses are used in isolation from a proper contextual understanding and from an understanding of how these passages fit into and are informed by the larger message of the Gospel. A liberated interpretation, therefore, must take all of these factors into consideration. These passages must be interpreted against the backdrop of several significant historical, cultural and socio-political factors that help to distinguish between timeless truths and principles, and details that are specific to the particular culture or life situation for which they were written.

One essential backdrop against which these difficult Pauline passages must be examined involves Jesus' inclusion of women in his vision and praxis of God's kingdom.

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[60] Ibid.

Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza makes her case for Jesus' inclusion of all, women and men, in his invitation to be involved in God's kingdom (*basileia*). In her book *In Memory of Her* she says:

> Jesus' *praxis* and *vision* of the *basileia* is the mediation of God's future into the structures and experiences of his own time and people.
>
> However, this future is mediated and promised to *all* members of Israel. No one is exempted. Everyone is invited. Women as well as men, prostitutes as well as Pharisees. The parable of the "Great Supper" (cf. Matt 22:1-14; Luke 14:16-24...) jolts the hearer into recognizing that the *basileia* includes everyone. It warns that only those who were "first" invited and then rejected the invitation will be excluded. Not the holiness of the elect but the wholeness *of all* is the central vision of Jesus. Therefore, his parables also take their images from the world of women. His healing and exorcisms make women whole. His announcement of "eschatological reversal" – many who are first will be last and those last will be first (Mark 10:31; Matt 19:30; 20:16; Luke 13:30)—applies also to women and to their impairment by patriarchal structures.[61]

The critical point here is that Jesus' vision of the kingdom of God includes both men and women who embrace Christ's invitation. It is a vision that Jesus sets forth in his own teachings and actions and establishes as a model for his followers.

Another factor that first must be considered when interpreting these tough Pauline passages is the world in which New Testament women lived. There are two distinct pictures of the life of women in the New Testament that are painted by religious scholarship. On the one hand some Rabbinic literature paints a picture that Jewish women were excluded from much of Jewish religious life, from studying the Torah, and that "the

[61] Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 121.

rabbis saw women almost exclusively as sex objects and sources of danger, social disruption, and temptation."[62]

The view that is presented about women in some Greco-Roman findings suggests, however, that women were prominent participants in the life of the synagogue. Some women were even heads of synagogues, elders and strong financial contributors. It is most likely that the Greco-Roman world was more open to women participating in leadership positions in both civic and religious spheres. The Greco-Roman world was the area that made up the foundation of the Roman Empire. This geographical area is also referred to by the term "Hellenism," the area under the control of Alexander the Great. Public records that give information on women in this specific area affirm that this area was more open to the prominence of women. Bonnie Thurston explains that:

> Public decrees honoring women for public service occur with increasing frequency during the Hellenistic Period. Because of their economic and cultural prowess Hellenistic women were occasionally granted citizenship and political rights. . . . In short, as women acquired wealth, they exerted economic power and thereby became more publicly and politically prominent.
>
> In areas Hellenized through conquest . . . the legal status of women improved relatively rapidly. Egyptian documents, for example, show women as buyers, sellers, lessors, lessees, lenders, and liable for taxes, as well as able to receive and make legacies.[63]

Another critical factor to take into account when interpreting the tough passages that have been traditionally used against women in the church, is the role that women played in the early church. Although portrayals of women in the Greco-Roman world showed that some enjoyed lives of prominence, for the majority of women the

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[62] Bonnie Thurston, *Women in the New Testament: Questions and Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 17.

[63] Ibid., 18-19.

circumstances were mainly against women in ministry. With the few exceptions in the Greco-Roman world noted by Thurston, Brown notes that for the most part:

> A woman would not have been able to address a synagogue audience or most other gatherings of Jews and would, thereby, have been severely limited in reaching them. Jewish men who praised God daily for not making them a Gentile, slave, or a woman were not likely to accept female leadership, certainly not before conversion and probably not immediately after conversion.
>
> Jewish and Gentile women alike were typically denied access to the levels of education that would have given them the appearance of being knowledgeable individuals. They were certainly kept from learning Old Testament Scripture which was so foundational to an understanding of Jesus and the gospel.[64]

It should not be mistaken, however, that women were not a significant part of the early Christian church. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The presence of women was especially mentioned at the gathering of believers in the upper room (Acts 1:14). The women, therefore, were included in the number of those who received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Many women were among the new converts and were included in the number of those who suffered persecution for the cause of Christ under Saul (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-2; 22:4). Although the tough passages that are used to speak against women in ministry are attributed to Paul, this same man who once persecuted women believers alongside the men planted a local church in a woman's household using a core group of women (Acts 16:12-15). This was an endeavor by Paul that contrasted sharply with Judaism.[65]

In addition, despite those Pauline passages that are used against women in ministry, it is important to note that women were co-laborers with men in the work of early church ministry. The same Greek word *sunergos*, which Paul used fourteen times in

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[64] Brown, *Women Ministers*, 151.

[65] Ibid., 155.

reference to the male co-workers who joined him in the ministry, he also used in reference to three women: Priscilla (Rom. 16:3), and Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2-3). In the case of Priscilla, she was given the title in the same way that her ministry partner, her husband Aquila, was given it. *Sunergos* was a word that Paul never used in general to refer to believers; it was always a title reserved for his partners in ministry.[66]

Also in regards to Prisca (Luke used the diminutive form of her name Priscilla, whereas Paul used Prisca) and Aquila, since Paul referred to Prisca using the same ministerial terms as he did her husband Aquila, this suggests their joint importance as ones who partnered with Paul in the ministry of the early church. As Wayne Meeks notes, however, the order in which Paul and the author of Acts referred to them stresses Prisca's prominence. He says, "The fact that Prisca's name is mentioned before her husband's once by Paul and two out of three times in Acts suggests that she has higher status than her husband.[67] As a husband/wife ministry team that led a Christian congregation in their home, Prisca and Aquila provide the biblical model for clergy couple ministry.

The Pauline passages that are used against women in ministry must be interpreted in light of their proper contextual realities. The fact that Paul included women in ministry, not just on the periphery, but as heads of house churches and in co-leadership with their husbands, even though it was against the customs of the larger culture, must be considered in the interpretation of such passages. These factors must be considered when interpreting 1 Cor. 14:34-35, in which Paul is attributed to saying, "Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says" (NIV). These factors must also be considered in reference to 1 Tim.

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[66] Ibid.

[67] Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 59, 217.

2:11-12, "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent" (NIV). Given Paul's inclusion of women in ministry, these passages seem very contradictory. How could he have included women as preachers, teachers, and church leaders if he instructed that they should keep silent in the church and should not teach?

One of the strongest explanations in regards to 1 Cor. 14:34-35 is that these two verses are not actually Paul's words after all, but instead were added to the text at a later time by the Pauline interpreters who assembled the Pastoral Epistles. In several ancient manuscripts these verses appear at the end of the chapter as an addendum, instead of in the place in the text where they now appear. Richard Hays explains why these verses are most likely an interpolation by saying:

> One of the strongest reasons for regarding these verses as an interpolation is that their demand for women to remain silent in the assembly stands in glaring contradiction to 11:2-16, in which Paul teaches that women may in fact pray and prophecy in church as long as they keep their heads appropriately covered. It is hard to imagine how Paul could have written those instructions and then, just a few paragraphs later, have written that "it is shameful for a woman to speak in church" (14:35b). Furthermore, all of the other available evidence indicates that women played an active role in preaching, teaching and prophesying in the early Pauline communities.[68]

In regards to 1 Tim. 2:11-12, the explanation is similar. Instead of being an interpolation incorporated into a larger work this is actually thought to be Paul's authorship, some scholars have concluded that the entire epistle of 1 Timothy is attributed to another source altogether. Joanna Dewey explains that pseudonymity, where one author writes in the name of another, was a very common practice in antiquity. It was

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[68] Richard Hays, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching—First Corinthians* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 246-247.

often used "as a way to claim the authority of the supposed writer for the contents of the document." 1 Timothy, therefore, along with the other Pastoral Epistles, 2 Timothy and Titus, are thought to have been written as church administration handbooks by an unknown author.[69]

How, then, should these passages be understood for the Christian life of faith today? Hays contends that the larger theology of Paul's vision for Christian worship should guide the faith and practice of the church, instead of the few isolated texts that stand against women in ministry:

> There are good theological reasons to insist that we should be guided by Paul's vision of Christian worship in which the gifts of the Spirit are given to all members of the church, men and women alike, for the building up of the community. The few New Testament texts that seek to silence women (such as 1 Cor. 14:34-35 and 1 Tim. 2:11-15) should not be allowed to override this vision. As our congregations wrestle with the ongoing task of discerning God's will for our life together—a task to which 1 Corinthians repeatedly calls us—we must be faithfully attentive to Paul's wider vision of men and women as full partners in the work of ministry.[70]

The critical insights mentioned thus far enable one to understand these passages as relative to the specific life situations and historical and cultural contexts of the audiences for which they were intended, instead of as universal truths. "Thus the command for silence in church is not a command from Paul valid for all time; rather, it is the view of one author (not Paul) or one Christian group on how they would like to see women behave."[71] Understanding this notion is important for developing a liberated interpretation

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[69] Joanna Dewey, "1 Timothy" in *Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol Newsome and Sharon Ringe, Expanded ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998) 444.

[70] Hays, *Interpretation*, 249.

[71] Dewey, "1 Timothy," 447.

of these passages that have been used to hinder the full participation of women in the church. Treating these passages as timeless truths furthers the harm and oppression of women. Treating them as pertaining to a particular time and space in history, however, allows the real universal truth, Paul's vision of men and women as full ministry partners, to govern Christ's church as it pursues the will of God.

Theological Foundation: Toward a Theology of Men's & Women's Equality and Full Participation in God's Work

As noted in the earlier section outlining the historical perspectives that have hindered women from being co-equals with men in church and society, women have endured centuries of oppression that, had it not been for their faith and strength, would have kept them in states of hopelessness and helplessness. Despite the odds, however, women persevered and overcame (and are still overcoming) the barriers in church and society that have tried to strip them of their humanity and keep them in positions of inferiority. When they were silenced, women found a way to reclaim their own unique voice. When they were left out of structures important to the advancement of society, they created their own structures that allowed them to contribute to the greater good of humanity. When they were abused, controlled, misrepresented, and made to feel inferior, they somehow maintained their faith, dignity, strength, hope, love and humanity.

Women's ability to endure was largely due to their theology—how they at a gut level understood the God who created them and what they grew to believe about what God thought of them. Their theology, deep and rich in its content and meaning, has at its foundation an understanding of God's love for them—a love so profoundly authentic that it affirms instead of condemns their womanhood. Although such an understanding was

difficult for some women to arrive at given some of the Bible's seemingly hostile content, its androcentric interpretations, and the patriarchal and male dominating structure of the church, overall, Christian women developed their own personal uplifting understanding of God.

The result of such an understanding about God is that the spirit that allowed women to endure through the centuries strengthened the generations of women who followed, thereby giving rise to a sense of self not formulated by man, but formulated by who they themselves believed God to be and who God created them to be. This new sense of self, this feminist and womanist consciousness, has evolved into a powerful weapon in the struggle for liberation. Today, the theology that governs the feminist and womanist movements has evolved into well-defined, thorough, transformative, and incredibly insightful voices that stretch the church to open and deepen its dialogue about God and humanity's relationship with God. These theologies have paved the way for blockading the hindrances that have prevented women from being co-equals with men in church and society. Keeping close in mind the liberating biblical interpretations that were presented in the last chapter, therefore, these voices of womanist and feminist theology will guide this chapter of the dissertation toward developing a theology of men's and women's mutuality and co-equal participation in God's work.

In his conclusive remarks, responding to the essays that were presented at the 1984 Evangelical Colloquium on Women and the Bible, Nicholas Wolterstorff asked a question of men who would be swift to dismiss statements by women that they have been viewed and treated as less than fully human. He says that women's expression of how they feel they have been treated leads men to have to ponder and answer a fundamental

question: "Do we or do we not think that women are equal partners with men in God's creation and kingdom—and in particular, do we think that they are equally gifted?"[72]

The question that Wolterstorff posed is indeed one of the critical questions that must be addressed in developing a theology that sanctions men's and women's equality and mutuality. Although this is a question that Wolterstorff addressed to men so as to get them to understand the oppressiveness of their ways, this question is also critical for women to ask themselves and answer for themselves. Several feminist and womanist theologians have done just that and have answered the question with a resounding "yes" on both counts, thereby developing a theology that seeks to cry out against any claims that suggest otherwise.

Val Webb debunks the perceptions and stereotypes that portray feminism in a negative light and states that feminism's call for gender equality is part of what makes it central to the overall Christian message:

> When feminism is seen as a commitment to Galatians 3:28—that baptism makes everyone equal and demands a community where this equality is preserved—to be a Christian *is* to be a feminist! Feminism is a *specific* example of this radical idea, more revolutionary than simply burning bras. The message of the early church as a discipleship of equals *prefigured* the feminist movement, and if Christianity calls itself the Way of Jesus Christ, feminism is not in opposition, but *central* to it.[73]

Rebecca Merrill Groothuis adequately defines what is meant by "equality" as she defines the term according to biblical affirmation:

> Biblical equality refers to the fundamental biblical principle that every human being stands on equal ground before God; there is no group of persons that is inherently more or less worthy than

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[72] Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Hearing the Cry" in *Women, Authority and the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1986), 287.

[73] Val Webb, *Why We're Equal* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999), 13.

> another. It follows from this principle that there is no moral or theological justification for permanently granting or denying a person status, privilege, or prerogative solely on the basis of that person's race, class, or gender.
>
> A biblical view of gender equality does not mean that gender makes no difference in a person's identity or behavior, but that gender ought not, in and of itself, limit a person's status or ministry opportunities. The appropriate outworking of the biblical ideal of equality is for women and men to have equal opportunity for ministry in the church, and shared authority with mutual submission within marriage. This positing of a universal spiritual principle of female subordination to male authority within the home and the church runs contrary to the principle of biblical equality.[74]

This definition of equality articulates the quest that womanists and feminists embark upon in their theologizing. It is the basis for developing a theology that encourages men's and women's equality in the church, which includes co-equal participation in God's work.

Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza elaborates on what this pursuit of equality entails as she says:

> Feminism first maintains that women are human persons, and it therefore demands free development of full personhood for all, women and men. Second, feminism maintains that human rights and talents or weaknesses are not divided by sex. . . .
>
> Feminism has therefore vigorously criticized all institutions that exploit women, stereotype them, and keep them in inferior positions. In this context, feminist analysis points out not only that Christianity had a major influence in the making of Western culture and sexist ideology, but also that the Christian churches and theologies still perpetuate the "feminine mystique" and women's inferiority through their institutional inequalities and theological justifications of women's innate difference from men.[75]

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[74] Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 19-20.

[75] Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesia-logy of Liberation* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 57-58.

Alongside feminist theology, its emergence out of the two-fold oppressive contexts of racism and sexism gives womanist theology a unique and powerful place in the discussion of women's liberation. Experiencing the need for liberation from the oppression that existed due to not one, but two elements of who they were created to be, Black and woman, Black women theologians are a critical voice for liberation. Because of its unique oppressive context, womanist theology stands as its own voice, distinct from, yet interrelated with the feminist voices of White women. Delores Williams explains the aim that womanist theology strives for by saying:

> Womanist theology attempts to help black women see, affirm and have confidence in the importance of their experience and faith for determining the character of the Christian religion in the African-American community. Womanist theology challenges all oppressive forces impeding black women's struggle for survival and for the development of a positive, productive quality of life conducive to women's and the family's freedom and well-being. Womanist theology opposes all oppression based on race, sex, class, sexual preference, physical disability and caste.[76]

As it stands alongside feminist theology and other theologies of liberation, especially Black male liberation theology, womanist theology also remains distinct as a voice that critiques these others for their participation in the oppression of Black women:

> Like black male liberation theology, womanist theology assumes the necessity of responsible freedom for all human beings. But womanist theology especially concerns itself with the faith, survival and freedom-struggle of African-American women. Thus womanist theology identifies and critiques black male oppression of black females while it also critiques white racism that oppresses all African Americans, female and male. Like white feminist theology, womanist theology affirms the full humanity of women. But womanist theology also critiques white feminist participation in the perpetuation of white supremacy, which continues to dehumanize black women. Yet womanist theology is organically

[76] Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, xiv.

> related to black male liberation theology and feminist theology in its various expressions. . .[77]

As has been noted thus far, womanist and feminist theologies are crucial liberating voices in the church. These theologies provide a way for talking about God that challenges how the church has historically and traditionally excluded women from full participation in the work of God, and calls for change. It is these theologies that under gird thinking about God that validates the full participation of women in ministry by encouraging equality and mutuality between women and men.

In order to arrive at an understanding of God that sanctions and affirms mutuality and equality between women and men in the church, a foundational starting place is an analysis of what we say about God. To engage in theology is to talk about God, so a good starting point for theological development is analyzing how we describe God. Val Webb makes a critical point as she discusses how God is traditionally talked about in the church:

> It may come as a shock to some that whatever we say about God is metaphorical. Metaphors take the characteristics of one thing to describe *something else* when that something else is hard to describe adequately any other way. . . .
>
> We can only talk about God in metaphors, since none of us have seen the Divine-in-Itself, and the metaphors we choose *matter* because they shape how we think about and relate to God. It also *matters* if metaphors lose their *metaphorical* status in a society over time and begin to *replace* the object described.[78]

As our metaphors for God shape how we view and relate to God, Webb points out that we have to question the metaphors we use to describe God, particularly those that

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[77] Ibid.

[78] Webb, *Why We're Equal,* 111-112.

portray God as solely male.[79] This is important because striving toward a theology that affirms gender equality requires that one grapples with the traditional way that the church has overwhelmingly been limited in its portrayal of God as male. Webb points out that the male descriptions of God as found in Scripture stemmed from authors who lived in a patriarchal society. God, however, when describing Godself used metaphors that were not limited to maleness:

> The Hebrew people saw God exceeding all creaturely distinctions. When God called Moses to lead them out of captivity in Egypt, Moses, anticipating their questions, asked God whom he should say sent him—what was the divine password (Ex. 3:13-14)? God did not confess to maleness or even resort to male metaphors, but settled for "I am who I am" or "I will be what I will be"—the unlimited possibilities of God-ness without need for limiting metaphors or human look-alikes.[80]

God's description of Godself opens the door for overcoming restrictive portrayals of God as male and leads us toward an understanding that God's essence is not limited to gender. To limit God's being to a specific gender excludes the other half of God's human creation from the acknowledgement that God fashioned both genders after God's image. To understand and acknowledge, however, that both genders are made in the image of God leads toward embracing the notion that men and women are created equal. This implies, then, that just as male portrayals of God are restrictive, trying to gain some sort of gender balance by portraying God as female creates the same challenges to understanding gender equality. Gender equality is between men and women and should not be mistaken as something that should be projected onto God, because God transcends gender. The goal, therefore, is not to portray God as both male and female (since God

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[79] Ibid., 112.

[80] Ibid.

transcends gender), but to understand that both female and male were created in the image and likeness of God. Judy Brown explains this as she says, "The fact that humanity carries the image of God cannot be turned into the notion that God carries the image of humanity. God says, 'I am God and not man' (Hosea 11:9). God transcends creation, which means God transcends things as physical as sexuality."[81] To understand that the essence of God's being is not captured by gender representation, but that both men and women bear the image of God leads toward embracing the notion that men and women are created equal.

Such an understanding that God transcends gender empowers one to arrive at a theology of equality despite the overwhelming use of male portrayals, particularly the use of male pronouns, used to talk about God. Although God is usually referred to by pronouns like "he" and "him," seeking to understand God's person apart from gender helps one to disassociate the use of such pronouns from referring to maleness. Brown notes that because of the limits of language, "he" is the most appropriate pronoun to refer to God. She explains:

> Why isn't "it" used of God? "It" cannot be used because it is not a personal pronoun. It would not reflect the personal character of God and would thereby invite the theological error of viewing God as an abstract principle or force. Why is the inserting of "he/she" or the interspersing of "she" throughout the text an unacceptable approach? Because "she" unavoidably connotes gender, and any connotation of gender invites the theological error of viewing God as human-like. What about using "they" for the "three-in-one" God? In a world of multiple false gods, it evidently was and probably still is essential that God's unity be given special emphasis. The only pronoun, then, that can be used of God in Hebrew, Greek, English, and many other languages is "he." . . . It

[81] Brown, *Women Ministers,* 111.

> is being used in its general sense as a personal pronoun, not in its specific sense as a masculine pronoun.[82]

The use of "he" and "him" in reference to God, therefore, simply provides a means of talking about God, and does not make reference to God as being male.

Specifically as gender equality relates to the question of if both sexes are equally sanctioned to participate in God's work, one issue that surfaces is the distinct male gender of Jesus, God's ultimate ministry force in the world:

> But wasn't Jesus a male? Yes, of course He was. But the important question is, "*Why* was Jesus male?" . . . What was necessary and, consequently, what was most meaningful in Jesus' birth and life was that God became flesh, not that God became male. The Bible states this very fact: "The Word became flesh" (John 1:14). . . . Even Jesus' primary title for Himself, "Son of Man," and most other New Testament references to Jesus being a "man" use the Greek word for "human being" ("anthropos") rather than the Greek word for "male" ("aner" or "arsen")…
>
> The fact that Jesus had a sexual identity does have theological significance. In order to be fully human, Jesus had to be male or female. . . . If the choice could not have been based upon God's gender because God is neither male not female, and if the choice could not have been based upon God's preference because God does not favor men over women, then what determined Jesus' gender. The likeliest possibility is the culture into which Jesus was born.[83]

Understanding then that Jesus' maleness was culturally necessary and not a blanket requirement for participation in the work of God is necessary in validating the place of both men and women in the work of ministry.

The use of male imagery when referring to the Trinity creates challenges as well:

> The problem for feminist theologians is that, throughout church history, the metaphor has become the thing. By calling God Father, God has been transformed into the shape and maleness of a

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[82] Ibid., 110-111.

[83] Ibid., 116.

> patriarchal father, and consequently the human father has been designated Godlike and thus given authority over others.
>
> Once this "essential" connection is made between maleness and divinity, there are *practical* fallouts. It legitimates male rule in religious, political, public, and private realms, automatically subordinating women to men . . .[84]

It can be difficult to rise above the challenges that the overwhelming use of male imagery in defining the three Persons of the Trinity has created in the church. Overcoming these challenges, however, can begin with a theological understanding about the interconnectedness of the three Persons of the Trinity. Webb notes that "earliest theological explanations in the church for the relationship between God and Jesus focused not on biology, but on whether God and Jesus were of the same substance, that is, both God, and whether the Trinity was 'three masks' (*personae*) of God. The metaphor *persona* as "mask" would in time also become "persons"—"God in three Persons, blessed Trinity. . . ." Over time the idea developed that the three Persons of God were separate entities, which went against the argument that the Trinity was One.[85]

The explanations that focus not on Father and Son as male Persons but as Persons of the same substance, interconnected in a loving purpose to bring redemption to humanity, helps lead toward a theology of mutuality and equality, as Christian men and women strive to heed the example of the Divine. All Persons of the Trinity together shape and fulfill the Divine plan and purpose. They co-exist and bring about the fulfillment of their plan, not in subordination one to another, but in a mutually comprehensive unity.

In addition to examining those aspects of God's Person that help to answer the question of equality, also important to add to the discussion is the examination of how the

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[84] Webb, *Why We're Equal,* 120-121.

[85] Ibid., 118.

message of equality is affirmed by the overall truth of the Gospel. At the heart of a vision for men's and women's equality in the church is the notion that in Christ the distinctions that lead to separatist "us vs. them" ideologies, thereby leading to the oppression of one group and the dominance of another, are overcome. This belief is expressed in Gal. 3:27-29, a scriptural passage that is central in feminist theology. Fiorenza speaks to this thought by saying, "Christian feminism is fascinated by the vision of equality, wholeness, and freedom expressed in Gal. 3:27-29: in Christ Jesus 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female.'"[86] She goes further to say, "Feminist theology as critical theology is driven by the impetus to make the vision of Gal. 3:28 real within the Christian community. It is based on the conviction that Christian theology and Christian faith are capable of transcending their own ideological sexist forms."[87]

For the vision of Gal. 3:28 to be made real in the church involves far more than the acknowledgement of equality in theory. It must be lived out in the church's praxis. Fiorenza makes the case that the pattern and history that the church has exhibited of not fully living up to its claims for equality has to be overcome:

> This Magna Carta of Christian feminism was officially affirmed by Vatican II in the Constitution on the Church. . . . Yet this vision was never completely realized by the Christian church throughout its history. . . . The failure of the church to realize the vision of Galatians 3:28-29 in its own institutions and praxis had as its consequence a long sexist theology of the church, which attempted to justify the ecclesial praxis of inequality to suppress the Christian vision and call of freedom and equality within the church.[88]

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[86] Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, 68.

[87] Ibid., 70.

[88] Ibid., 68-69.

Such glaring inconsistencies within the church need to be overcome by change. The call of a theology that embraces equality and mutuality between men and women in the church is a call for change—gut level change that penetrates every area of the church that opposes these principles. "The very character of the hierarchical-patriarchal church structure has to be changed if women are to attain their place and full authority within the church and theology. The Christian churches will overcome their patriarchal and oppressive past traditions and present theologies only if the very base and function of these traditions and theologies are changed."[89] It is not enough, then, for the church to state its claim for equality. It must embody the spirit of equality as it strives to tear down those barriers that have hindered women from being viewed and treated as co-equals with men in the church.

As with any theology, the charge to change those things that violate what God calls for in humanity's relationship with God and one another is critical. It is this transformative call that makes the pursuit of equality central to the larger Gospel message. To strive to change inequality is to pursue justice and liberation, overarching themes that remain at the heart of the Gospel.

Throughout God's self-revelation found in Scripture, God is an establisher of justice and liberation and makes their pursuit a requirement for those who follow God. Form the story of the Exodus, throughout the time of the Kings and Prophets, to the life and ministry of Jesus and beyond, God clearly established Godself as Liberator. When God's people cried out to God from the valleys of oppression and despair, God is praised for having heard their cry and for delivering them. Especially in God's ultimate act of

[89] Ibid., 71.

self-revelation through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, God made a case for the "least of these" as Jesus reached out to the marginalized in society.

As Fiorenza says, the centrality of the message of justice and liberation is a foundational part of any theology. "Only when theology is on the side of the outcast and oppressed, as was Jesus, can it become incarnational and Christian."[90] At the very core of feminist and womanist theologies, as with other theologies of liberation, is the pursuit of justice through the tearing down of inequalities, so that the new vision and community that was established in Christ, where "there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female" is more fully realized. "Expressed in traditional theological language, feminist [and womanist] theology is rooted in conversion and a new vision; it names the realities of sin and grace and it leads to a new mission and community."[91]

Because womanist theology is distinct from feminist theology in that it was birthed out of the doubly oppressive contexts of sexism and racism, its voice is particularly insightful for understanding the centrality of justice and liberation in theology. Emilie Townes notes that the new vision that theologies of liberation strive toward is an apocalyptic vision that bears no tolerance for injustice:

> Apocalyptic vision. Eschatological hope. These twin concepts move within womanist spirituality. The apocalyptic vision evolves from crisis and martyrdom. It is a theo-ethical, sociopolitical manifesto that refuses to accept or tolerate injustice. It seeks to overcome the discrepancy (and attendant craziness) between what is and what should be—the discrepancy between empirical reality and legitimate expectations.[92]

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[90] Ibid., 67.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Townes, *Blaze of Glory,* 121.

A. Elaine Brown Crawford labels the pursuit of such a vision that is not yet realized as hope. It is a profound sense of hope that has allowed Black women to endure centuries of horrifying injustices. In her book *Hope in the Holler*, Crawford speaks of these injustices in terms of Black women's "Holler" throughout history and remaining today:

> African American women have lived in the echoes of their own Holler. The Holler is the primal cry of pain, abuse, violence, separation. It is a soul-piercing shrill of the African ancestors that demands the recognition and appreciation of their humanity. The Holler is the refusal to be silenced in a world that denied their very existence as women. The Holler is the renunciation of racialized and genderized violence perpetrated against them generation after generation. The Holler is a cry to God to "come see about me," one of your children.[93]

Despite the odds, the force that kept (and keeps) Black women striving for the fulfillment of the new vision and community that Christ makes available was hope. "African-American women continued to endure, survive, and transform their oppressive existence. Hope is a foundational source of this audacity to survive the Holler, the inhumanities and injustices of life. This 'unquenchable thirst for that which is not yet' is characterized as passion for life."[94] Such hope remains a driving force for women's liberation today. The full participation of women in the church has not yet been realized, and the barriers that hinder equality and mutuality have not been completely eliminated in the church, but hope remains the force that highlights the new vision.

Because of its focus and hope in the fulfillment of the new vision that is set forth in Christ, another critical component in a discussion on equality is the issue of

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[93] A. Elaine Brown Crawford, *Hope in the Holler: A Womanist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), xii.

[94] Ibid.

redemption. Historically, as the introduction of sin into the world and the consequential fall of humanity have been attributed primarily to Eve, the church has used this to justify the exclusion and limitation of women from full participation in the church. This clearly raises the issue of redemption, and the question that begs to be answered is, "Did Jesus fully restore all of humanity and make both men and women new creations?" Gretchen Gaebelein Hull deals with this vital question by saying:

> Jesus himself said of his redemptive act, "It is finished." Yet the traditionalists qualify that by saying to women who desire full participation within the body of Christ, "Yes, but . . ." the traditionalists' qualification is twofold: first, yes, you are redeemed, but you are permanently flawed because of Eve's frailty; second, yes, you are redeemed, but because of your flaw you must work out your salvation through a certain role.
>
> How those two answers limit the substitutionary atonement of Christ! Whatever the Pauline references to Genesis 2 and 3 mean, those references cannot mean that a woman must remain permanently flawed, for that would mean that Christ's shed blood is not powerful enough to cleanse them and make them a new creation. Those passages cannot mean that women are forever restricted in role because the Christ does not want to make them full children of God.
>
> *Can* Jesus fully restore me, a woman? Of course! . . .
>
> …redeemed women are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Sisters can enter into that inheritance equally with brothers and can share equally in its administration.[95]

Such an understanding of the redemptive act of Christ echoes again the heart of Gal. 3:28. Cheryl Townsend Gilkes notes the words of a Black male bishop, who in the 1950's, a time marked by women's oppression in the United States wrote, "FOR PERSONS FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED any incidental physical condition is no longer a barrier to freedom, or dignity, or value as a person whether that physical condition be social distinction, be race ('Jew or Gentile'), class ('bond or free'), or sex ('male or

[95] Gretchen Gaebelein Hull, "Response" in *Women, Authority and the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1986), 24-26.

female'). They all share one spiritual destiny and nature and value in Christ. They all are 'fellow heirs' of the promise in Christ."[96]

The issue of redemption is fundamentally important because it is the core of an understanding of salvation. Christ's redemption has the power to fully restore, liberate, and reconcile all believers regardless of gender. This would suggest, therefore, as Hull makes aware, that that which keeps such liberation from being fully realized for women is certainly not something that is lacking in what Christ has done, but the problem lies with man:

> We can no longer ignore what seems to many to be the underlying problem. If we let the answer remain "Yes, woman is equal in the sight of God, but she is limited in the sight of man," we are really saying that it is not Christ who has the problem with woman, but her brother who does not want her fully restored, who does not want her joining hands with him in mutual ministry.[97]

A liberating theology that affirms and encourages the equality of men and women involves addressing the tough questions raised in this paper. What such an examination leads one to discover is that in Christ the way is made for all of God's people to live in the fullness of who God created them to be and to glorify God as redeemed persons grateful for God's grace. The hindrances that prevent women from doing so, therefore, are not from above. The continued blockades to women's liberation and full participation in the work of God is evidence that humanity still has a ways to go in yielding to the redemptive power of Christ that can transform any and all oppressive human conditions. Once again, the call to change is critical. The church must keep striving toward the new

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[96] Gilkes, *If It Wasn't For the Women,* 124.

[97] Hull, "Response," 26.

vision that is opened up in Christ, where all, both women and men, are new creations with equal access and opportunity to give themselves and their service back to God.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT DESCRIPTION & METHODOLOGY: SEEKING QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS THROUGH THE USE OF IN-DEPTH CLERGY COUPLE INTERVIEWS

As the intent of this study was to gain insight into the dynamics of clergy couple ministry, the project objectives that the author sought to achieve while pursuing this investigation include: (1) to identify and gain the participation of clergy couples with ministries that are viable to study, (2) to create and implement research instruments that will reveal significant insight into the ministry dynamics of couples' team ministry, and (3) to analyze and interpret the qualitative insights drawn from the process in a way that is clear and valuable in shedding light on this growing ministry paradigm, and is useful as a resource for clergy couples who seek to gain insight into their own ministry partnership.

Project Purpose (Project's Contribution to Ministry)

The author proposed that an investigation into the emerging paradigm of clergy couples will provide insight that will be valuable as this "new" ministry dynamic continues to impact the church. Allowing these insights to surface directly from the minds and hearts of clergy couples themselves provides a worthwhile contribution to the church as it transitions beyond its traditional sense of pastoral leadership. Such insights also serve well as a resource for clergy couples in general to further illumine the implications of their ministry partnership.

The writer expected that engaging in such an investigation would provide insight into several aspects of couples' team ministry. The specific learning objectives that she expected the clergy couples who participated in the project to provide insight into include: (1) how each individual spouse's roles and responsibilities come to be defined in the shared ministry, as well as how each spouse can compliment the other in their roles and responsibilities; (2) the impact that the growing paradigm of clergy couple team ministry is having on the larger Christian church, especially on broadening and changing the church's more traditional sense of pastoral leadership; (3) the adjustments in thinking and practice that a congregation has to make to embrace a couple's shared pastoral ministry, and how the couple can help their congregation make those adjustments; (4) the unique impact that a couple's shared pastoral ministry can potentially have on a congregation as compared to that of the more traditional solo pastoral model; (5) the potential impact that clergy couple team ministry can have on the couple itself; and (6) what the necessary components are for a couple to engage in successful team ministry together.

Also, since clergy couple ministry is a growing paradigm, another value of doing such an investigation is to allow it to uncover the areas of this ministry phenomenon that warrant further investigation. The author proposed that this investigative process would reveal the areas where even further insight is needed as this emerging paradigm continues to impact the larger Christian church.

Research Methodology

A qualitative research approach was most appropriate for the type of investigation that the author pursued in this project. The specific research tools used consisted of in-depth, descriptive, open-ended questionnaires given via personal or telephone interviews. The author collected the data for this project by conducting personal interviews of the clergy couples who were participants in the project. The use of a qualitative research method was most appropriate, as the characteristics of qualitative research are intended to engage in the type of study that this project proposed to do. Specifically, John Creswell, in his book *Research Design*, provides a description of qualitative research methods that explains why this approach was best for the type of project the author proposed.

First, in qualitative research, "The researcher collects open-ended, emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data."[1] To gain the level of insight that is intended for this project, the research approach must allow project participants to express their perspectives and experiences openly. Conducting personal interviews that utilized an open-ended descriptive questionnaire allowed the sort of rich insights to surface, from which significant themes were then interpreted.

Secondly, "Qualitative research takes place in the natural setting. The qualitative researcher often goes to the site (home, office) of the participant to conduct the research."[2] This aspect of qualitative research certainly applies to this project, as the interviews were either conducted in the couple's home or via telephone while the couples were at home or at the office.

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[1] John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 2d ed. (Lincoln, NE: Sage Publications, 2003), 18.

[2] Ibid., 181.

Thirdly, in qualitative research, "The theory or general pattern of understanding will emerge as it begins with initial codes, develops into broad themes, and coalesces into a grounded theory or broad interpretation. These aspects of an unfolding research model make it difficult to prefigure qualitative research tightly at the proposal or early research stage."[3] The scope of this project also fits this characteristic of qualitative research. Because the intent of the project was to allow the themes and insights to emerge out of the investigative research process itself, no specific theories or hypotheses about the ministry dynamics of clergy couples were prefigured to guide the research toward a particular end. Instead, this open-ended approach to research allowed the patterns and themes to emerge on their own, which then provided opportunity for interpretation.

Fourthly, as Creswell continues to elaborate:

> Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive. This means that the researcher makes an interpretation of the data. This includes developing a description of an individual or setting, analyzing data for themes or categories, and finally making an interpretation or drawing conclusions about its meaning personally and theoretically, stating the lessons learned, and offering further questions to be asked.[4]

This interpretive aspect of qualitative research describes how the insights of this project were drawn. As meaning was attached to the significant themes and patterns that arose from the collected data, the primary purpose of the project was fulfilled—the lessons learned (qualitative insights) emerged and the areas that need further investigation became clear.

Finally, "The qualitative researcher systematically reflects on who he or she is in the inquiry and is sensitive to his or her personal biography and how it shapes the study.

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[3] Ibid., 182.

[4] Ibid.

This introspection and acknowledgment of biases, values, and interests (or reflexivity) typifies qualitative research today."[5] This qualitative aspect is perhaps what makes this research approach the most valuable for the author's own personal gain as the researcher. This proposed project is one in which the author has a vested interest as a minister who is currently in a ministry partnership with her husband. A research approach, therefore, that allowed for her reflections and experiences is the most appropriate for what she hoped to achieve from this study.

Instrumentation

As noted earlier, the research instruments used to gather the qualitative insights for this study are open-ended descriptive questionnaires given via personal interviews to the clergy couples who agreed to be a part of the project. The questionnaire used to gather the data can be found in the Appendix. As a means of meeting the desired learning objectives, the questionnaire contained twenty-six questions that all sought to get at the heart of one of the six ministry dynamics into which the author desired to gain insight. Three couples were interviewed (see the next chapter for the description of the couples interviewed) and each spouse was asked to respond to all twenty-six questions. This gave the author a total of 156 responses to interpret and from which to gain qualitative insights.

[5] Ibid.

CHAPTER FIVE

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION: QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS GAINED FROM IN-DEPTH CLERGY COUPLE INTERVIEWS

As mentioned in the last chapter, the clergy couple questionnaire (see Appendix) was used to conduct in-depth interviews of three clergy couples who consider themselves to share pastoral leadership. In order to gain diverse perspectives, the author's intent was to select three couples whose contexts were different as it relates to both the length of time they have been married and the length of time they have been in ministry together.

Couple Profiles

The first couple, Rev. Nathaniel and Rev. Terri [redacted], are a young couple both in regards to the length of time they have been married and the length of time they have been joined together in ministry. At the time that the interview was conducted, the [redacted] have been married for going on five years. They have shared pastoral leadership for the past two years at Tried Stone Baptist Church in the Rankin community of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Nathaniel was called to Tried Stone two years ago for his first pastoral appointment as a senior pastor. Previously he and Terri were actively engaged in the ministry of Mt. Ararat Baptist Church in Pittsburgh, where they met each other and eventually married. There, Nathaniel was an ordained associate minister and Terri was a minister in training, working toward ordination. As a result of

her successful ministerial preparation at Mt. Ararat, after accepting the call to Tried Stone, Nathaniel licensed and ordained his wife, Terri, and she has served beside her husband as the associate pastor since then.

The second couple interviewed, Rev. Robert and Rev. Beverly [redacted], are a mature couple both in regards to the length of time they have been married and the length of time they have served in ministry together. They have been married for forty years, and of those years, they have been in ministry together for thirty of them. At the time they were interviewed, they were serving in their third assignment in which they share pastoral leadership. They are currently the proud pastors of St. James African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AME Zion) Church in Masillion, Ohio, where they have been since 1992.

Because of the structure of the AME Zion denomination, which traditionally appoints only one minister to a pastoral assignment at any one church, Robert is the one who has been given the charge by the denomination to serve as the senior pastor. Beverly ministers by his side as the assistant pastor. Because of the denomination's tradition of appointing only one minister in a pastoral capacity, often times the individual spouses of clergy couples are appointed to pastor different churches. Both being ordained elders in the denomination, this was the case for the [redacted] couple. For seven of the fourteen years that Robert has been appointed to St. James, Beverly served as the senior pastor of a different church in their conference. Since returning to St. James, Beverly picked up where she left off in sharing pastoral leadership with her husband as they lead their growing congregation forward together.

The third interviewed couple, Rev. Hubert and Sister Yvonne [redacted], are unique in that they are a mature married couple in regards to the length of time they have been married, but they are a young clergy couple in regards to the length of time they have been sharing pastoral leadership. The [redacted] have been married for forty-two years, so like the [redacted] couple, they are veterans in marriage. Like the [redacted], however, they have few years of experience together sharing pastoral leadership. Hubert is an ordained elder in the AME Zion church and has been pastoring for eight years. Yvonne has been a local (licensed) minister in the denomination for two years and is currently pursuing ordination. Although they have shared the ministry of the church for the entire eight years that Hubert has been a pastor, they consider themselves to have started sharing the pastoral responsibilities of the church for the past two years since Yvonne became a licensed minister. They are in ministry together at St. James AME Zion Church in Indiana, Pennsylvania.

Qualitative Insights Gained from Clergy Couple Interviews

As elaborated on in the last chapter, the author set out to gain qualitative insight into six distinct dynamics of clergy couple ministry. The data gained through the responses of the clergy couples to the questions posed in the interviews did indeed provide enough information to have successfully met the author's learning objectives. What follows are the findings that were revealed through the interviews in support of the six learning objectives.

Learning Objective #1: How each individual spouse's roles and responsibilities come to be defined in the shared ministry, as well as how each spouse can compliment the other in their roles and responsibilities

The questions from the Clergy Couple Questionnaire that sought to draw out insights in regards to this learning objective are numbers 2, 3, 4, and 5 (see Appendix). The major theme that emerged from the couples' responses to these questions is that the traditions of their respective denominations and individual church contexts certainly play a part in defining their individual roles, but do not have to limit the fruitfulness of the partnership. For the [redacted] and [redacted] couples, both being a part of the AME Zion denomination, the structure of the church is such that only one minister is usually given the pastoral charge over the congregation, even if both the husband and wife are in ministry together. The denomination has not yet made it a part of its regular practice to appoint both the husband and the wife as joint leaders of a single congregation if both are in ministry. Often times, if both seek to be involved in pastoral ministry, they are often individually appointed as solo pastors to different congregations. This was once the case for the [redacted] couple, where for seven years Beverly pastored a separate congregation than did her husband. In this denomination, if both husband and wife are appointed to the same congregation, one, usually the husband, is appointed as the pastor, and the wife is appointed in a supporting capacity. This is the current case for the [redacted] and the [redacted] couples. The husbands have been given the charge by the denomination to serve as the senior pastors, and the wives to provide the help and support that is needed.

Noteworthy about the [redacted] and [redacted] couples is that despite the distinction in their ministerial rank and titles, both couples consider themselves to share pastoral

leadership none the less. The denomination, therefore, plays a part in how their roles are defined, but they have chosen for themselves to operate as full partners in ministry.

In a similar manner, although not appointed by the denomination, Nathaniel [redacted] was called by Tried Stone Baptist to be the senior pastor, but engaged his wife, Terri, as his ministry partner early on in the acceptance of that call, even though that church had never ordained a woman nor had a woman in any sort of pastoral leadership capacity. He says about Terri, "She is my partner in ministry. [Although] we have the title of pastor and associate, we are a ministry team, and I don't separate the two." Their acceptance of their shared ministry as a couple stands in stark contrast to the way they believe their congregants perceive their shared ministry. They believe that because of its tradition, the majority of the members of Tried Stone have yet to accept and embrace Terri's involvement in sharing the pastoral leadership of the church. The couple is striving to help the congregation adjust to and embrace their shared ministry, yet they consider their ministry to be a partnership nonetheless.

This suggests that although the emerging model of couples sharing pastoral leadership goes against the traditions of many churches and denominations, these traditions do not have to be a hindrance to the joint ministry of a couple. Although these traditions will often impact the way that the roles are defined for the couple, a couple still can, and must, decide what their ministry partnership will entail.

Another important insight that emerged concerning how the spouses' individual roles are established is that the primary defining factor should be each spouse's individual areas of giftedness and passion. Each spouse must be strong enough to allow him/herself as well as his/her spouse to flourish in the areas of ministry that God has

gifted them and instilled within them the passion to be fruitful. The ministry partnership is strengthened when each spouse operates in the fullness of how God designed and gifted them to operate, and this means that neither spouse should be trapped into traditional roles and responsibilities for which they are neither gifted nor passionate.

The [redacted], for instance, strive to have this principle govern their ministry partnership. Nathaniel feels that he is particularly gifted in the shepherding responsibilities that are a part of the pastoral leadership role, and he therefore considers this to be one of his primary roles. He does not think of himself, however, as being particularly gifted when it comes to the administrative responsibilities involved in leading the congregation. This is where Terri steps in. She does feel as though she flourishes well in an administrative capacity, and she, therefore, handles most of the administrative responsibility. Likewise, they both have a passion for teaching, and this is one of the primary ministry areas in which they share the responsibility and flourish together.

In regards to providing insight into how the spouses' roles and responsibilities can compliment each other, a common belief among the three couples was that part of God's reason for bringing them together in both marriage and ministry is because they compliment each other. One's area of weakness tends to be the other's area of strength, and they believe that this is certainly not by accident, but that God intended it to be so. Nathaniel speaks directly to this point as he says about Terri, "Where I lack, she picks up. Where she lacks, I pick up. We are pretty much well rounded. And I always tell my wife, 'I know that God put us together,' for that specific reason." The other couples seem to affirm Nathaniel's sentiments in this regard. They feel that as each of them functions according to how God has wired them, they naturally compliment each other, and there

exists a much greater ability for the two of them to be far more fruitful together than either of them would be on their own.

Being that in all three couples the wife serves in more of a supportive pastoral leadership capacity, one of the interesting things that surfaced during the interview is that all three wives referred to themselves as their husbands' "helpmate." In this regard they understand their roles, whatever those roles may entail, to be to join with and assist their husbands in pursuing the will of God for that congregation that has been entrusted to their care. Beverly [redacted] sheds light on how such an understanding actually helps each spouse's role to compliment the other as she explains,

> I am, as the Bible so aptly states, [Robert's] helpmate, and I understand that position and that position is not a problem to me. However, in our ministry, we find that no one really usurps authority over the other. Therefore, the partnership works well on both fronts. We are sure of our calling and are not in one another's way. Our ministry partnership is first to seek what is the will of God for us individually and together, and our pastoral leadership is to provide shepherding to those who are in this vineyard [in a way] that will fit the need.

Beverly's comments can help one understand how the roles of the spouse who is in the supportive ministerial capacity can compliment the other's leadership roles if their sense of mutuality and partnership remains a more significant factor than the authority that one can exercise over the other. When a genuine sense of mutuality and team consciousness exists amongst the couple, the support that the "helpmate" provides does indeed compliment the leadership of the pastor who is the primary lead.

Learning Objective #2: The impact that the growing paradigm of clergy couple team ministry is having on the larger Christian church, especially on broadening and changing the church's more traditional sense of pastoral leadership

Questions 6, 7, 8, 9, and 17 of the Clergy Couple Questionnaire were designed to gain insight into this learning objective. One thing that seemed to be a consensus among the three couples interviewed was that the growth of clergy couple team ministry was having a tremendous impact on the larger Christian church—a perceived positive impact. The perception in general is that God is raising up viable ministries that are led by clergy couples, and that these ministries are exposing the larger church to a new model of pastoral ministry that bears much fruit.

Where the couples believe the emergence of husbands and wives sharing pastoral leadership has the greatest impact is in drawing the church's attention back to God's original intention for the husband and wife. The couples believe that husbands and wives working together in ministry provide a real life model of what a true partnership in marriage and ministry can be like. They believe the church is transformed for the better when it witnesses husbands and wives standing side by side seriously engaged in marriage and in fulfilling God's purpose and plan for their lives together.

Robert and Beverly [redacted], for instance, agree that the church's exposure to the emerging vibrant, growing and fruitful ministries that are led by clergy couples is helping the church to understand and refocus on the partnership that God originally intended when he created man and woman. This in turn leads the church toward a greater sense of mutuality as both men and women grow to understand each other's importance in fulfilling the plan and purpose of God in the world and embrace each other as full participants in that journey. Robert states further that:

> It seems as though we are finally getting the picture of what God meant when He created woman by taking her out of the side of man. It was never meant that the woman should be lorded over by being stepped upon. Nor is it proved that the woman should be subservient to the man, but is taken out of his side to serve with him. . . . So God set this up a long time ago, but we're [the church] just now catching it.

As wives and husbands share pastoral leadership, they validate the importance of both men and women in kingdom building, and they also validate the union of marriage. As Terri [redacted] notes, "It [clergy couple ministry] is speaking a definite message about marriage, and then individually to both women and men . . . Seeing how serious I am about God and what He's doing in my life, it's making an impact on the women. And I know that my husband is making an impact on the men." Terri elaborates further about the tremendous impact that clergy couples are having on affirming marriage in the church as she notes the following:

> People [in the church] are considering leaving their spouses. Some statistic I was listening to today said that forty percent of Christian couples have affairs in the first five to ten years of marriage, and that's not a good thing. But I think people are looking at how serious the husband and wife ministry teams are. Yes, we go through problems and everything is not roses, but because God is the glue that keeps us together, we can make it. And I think that's making a definite statement too.

The other couples seem to echo her insight that one of the largest impacts of clergy couple ministry on the larger church is its modeling and affirmation of marriage in a time when not just the world, but also the church, is experiencing a marriage crisis.

As clergy couple ministry affirms marriage, along with the value of both women and men in the Body of Christ engaged as full partners in ministry, the larger church's more traditional view of pastoral leadership is broadened. What Hubert [redacted] says about this is, "I think it's [clergy couple ministry] going to blow the traditional leadership

theories of the male pastor and only the male pastor right out of the water. You can have two leaders in your church. . . . [Clergy couples] are showing the congregation how they should be working together also." This seems to suggest that clergy couple ministry helps to broaden the church's view of leadership to one that is more team conscious. Beverly Lewis provides similar insight as she says, "I believe that the paradigm of husband and wife team ministry is a blessing. It further gives the example that men and women can work together, and do so successfully. Who better to work along side than the one who has your interest and the interest of the congregation and the church at heart?"

As the traditional model of the solo pastor is broadened to embrace couple team ministry, the impact is potentially great for the entire family. Robert [redacted] says, "People in the church can observe the life of a dual [husband and wife] ministry. I know that people have shared with me saying, 'Oh, I'm so glad that you and your wife are together here. It just helps our whole family'. . . . I think it opens up another doorway for people to see that the pastor is not just there by himself, but he does have a helpmate."

Learning Objective #3: The adjustments in thinking and practice that a congregation has to make to embrace a couple's shared pastoral ministry, and how the couple can help their congregation make those adjustments

The questions from the Clergy Couple Questionnaire that went to the heart of this learning objective are 12 and 13. The primary theme that emerged from the interviews regarding the adjustments that a congregation must be willing to make to embrace a couple's team ministry is that congregations must be willing to let go of old traditions and ways of thinking and being that hinder the couple's freedom to flourish as a team. The first adjustment according to Nathaniel [redacted] is that the congregation is no

longer acknowledging and embracing one pastor, but two, and despite their traditional views of the role that a pastor's wife should play, the must make the shift to embracing her as pastor. He says, "[Congregations] have to adjust to the fact that there are two pastors, and no longer the tradition of the man being the pastor and the woman just being the associate or the evangelist. But they have to look at them both as pastors."

Nathaniel's wife, Terri, adds that a congregation has to be open to the reality that God often moves in ways that are different than the way that they have traditionally thought and experienced. God is not limited to doing things any one particular way, but can, and indeed has, chosen to work within this growing model of clergy couple ministry.

In regards to how a clergy couple can help the congregation to make the necessary adjustments toward embracing their shared leadership, one of the perspectives shared by Hubert and Yvonne [redacted] is that since Hubert was the senior pastor before Yvonne accepted a call to ministry, it was important that he assign her to roles that allowed her to operate in more of a ministerial and shared pastoral leadership capacity. By doing this, their congregation was able to begin to make the shift from seeing Yvonne in the "first lady" roles in which they were accustomed to seeing her flourish, to seeing her flourish as a pastoring partner with her husband.

The [redacted] highlighted a perspective that expressed just how difficult it can be for a couple to help their congregation transition to a place of embracing their shared leadership. They spoke about how important it is for the couple to remain persistent in their efforts to thrive together in ministry, despite the obstacles that the congregation presents. Being that they have only been at Tried Stone for two years so far, when they began their ministry there, the congregation had to not only make the necessary

adjustments to embrace Nathaniel as the newly called pastor, but also to embrace the couple's shared ministry. This was a dynamic that the congregation had never had to deal with before, and one that undoubtedly came with challenges. Being two years young at Tried Stone, the [redacted] are still in the process of trying to help their congregation make the adjustments necessary to embrace their ministry. As they work through the challenges, however, they note that persistence is the key. Terri says,

> For us, whatever they threw at us, we still came back. Whatever they said and however they treated us, we still showed up. We still represented God and what He wanted to do there. We'd go home and cry. We'd be very angry . . . but still we weren't going to give up. And I think that there were some who thought they would chase us away in six months to a year. But coming back and gradually beginning to administer change is how God moved.

Terri's husband, Nathaniel agrees and elaborates further by saying,

> You have to be consistent in who you are, consistent in what you do, and consistent in how you treat people. When people don't show you love, you have to be consistent at loving them. And that's what's going to keep on having to take place—to keep being consistent at who God has made you into, for that's what's going to draw them. . . . I've literally watched as God has changed people's lives and changed their hearts toward the pastors, because of the consistency.

The couple agrees that it does indeed take time to help a congregation get to the place of embracing a couple's shared ministry, but with plenty of patience, persistence, consistency and love in modeling the way of God, a congregation can be transformed.

Learning Objective #4: The unique impact that a couple's shared pastoral ministry can potentially have on a congregation as compared to that of the more traditional solo pastoral model

The insights revealed into this learning objective were gained in the couple's responses to questions 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, and 18. Robert [redacted] shared that part of the

unique impact that a clergy couple's ministry can have on a congregation is that the members have more than one leader to rely on, and can call on either the husband or the wife in their time of need and feel as though their needs are being tended to. His wife, Beverly, balances this perspective by sharing that a potentially disadvantaging impact that can occur is that some in the congregation may feel reluctant to go to either spouse in their time of need for fear of offending the other. She offers that to avoid having congregants question if one spouse would take offense to them seeking the support of the other spouse, it should be made clear at the onset that the couple is not in competition with one another, but instead is working together to meet the needs of the congregation.

A point of general consensus among the couples in regards to the impact that their ministry has on their congregations is that the impact is greatest upon very distinct groups. First of all, as noted earlier, the couples in the congregation are often greatly impacted by the example of marriage that the clergy couple presents, which affirms the union when little much else in society does. For the [redacted], the impact on couples is growing to the point that they have discerned a need for and started a marriage ministry for couples in their congregation. As the couples in their congregation learn and grow together, the [redacted] are bearing witness to how couples are being strengthened and encouraged.

Likewise, having been married for forty years, Robert and Beverly [redacted] are excited to know that their marriage and shared ministry are impacting other couples and singles in a big way. They believe that a clergy couple's shared ministry allows couples to see that both marriage and shared ministry for husbands and wives can work if the couple desires it to work. Couples in the congregation can see through the example of the

clergy couple's marriage and ministry that they can flourish together as well. In addition, single individuals in the congregation are given hope by seeing the strong example of a clergy couple. Whether they are waiting until their time for marriage or they are recovering from the hurts of divorce, singles can receive hope that marriage can work, as well as can shared ministry.

Another group in the congregation upon which Beverly and Robert [redacted] are noticing a profound impact is the associate ministers. They are experiencing first hand how a clergy couple's strong example in marriage and ministry can greatly influence and encourage other couples in the congregation to pursue God's will for their lives together. At St. James there are eleven associate ministers who sit under the [redacted] ministry tutelage. Of those eleven, there are two clergy couples who work side by side in ministry, one of which is their daughter, Joy, and their son-in-law, Michael. Also, there is a third clergy couple that began their ministry at St. James, and has since gone forward to pastor an area church together. In addition, another of the eleven associate ministers, whose wife is not a minister but is nonetheless actively engaged in the work of ministry as a Christian education director, works jointly with her in the work of the church.

As Beverly explains why she believes their impact has been so great on joining couples together in ministry, she says, "I think that the couples that are a part of the local ministry at St. James for the most part are able to see that the ministry was not devised to separate us, but to bring us together in a definite way." The fruit that is being produced through other couples in the congregation seems to speak for itself in regards to the impact that this couple's ministry is having on both the associate ministers and couples in their congregation.

Hubert and Yvonne [redacted] brought out an interesting perspective in regards to the uniqueness of the preaching that takes place in a congregation led by a clergy couple. They note that in a church led by a clergy couple, both the husband and the wife can preach the same theme from the same scriptural text and present completely different perspectives. The beauty in this is that a certain richness is drawn from the different perspectives of the same passage, and though the perspectives are different, the impact of the messages is consistent. Yvonne says, "Sometimes the uniqueness is in the difference—the different approach to bringing the message—because we're still [both] preaching God's Word." Likewise, Robert and Beverly [redacted] agree by saying that preaching gains even more power as its message is reinforced in the minds and hearts of the people by having the perspectives of both the husband and the wife to present it.

Learning Objective #5: The potential impact that clergy couple team ministry can have on the couple itself

The responses to questions 23, 24, and 25 of the questionnaire provided the insight gained into this learning objective. The couples all seemed to agree that doing ministry together has had a positive and rewarding impact on each spouse individually and on their marriage. The [redacted] believe that doing ministry together has brought them closer together, and has given them a common bond. Yvonne states that although she and Hubert have different recreational preferences when it comes to activities and interests, the work of ministry has been their common ground and a means of them being drawn closer together. She says, "Our tastes in activities are totally different. And while we respect each other's differences, we tried to enjoy each other's different activities, but it just never meshed. But now it is." She attributes this to their being together in ministry,

and Hubert agrees by saying, “we do things together that we never did before.” For them, this is one of the rewarding aspects of being in ministry together.

The [redacted] agree as well that their joint ministry has had a special impact on their marriage. They believe that it has matured their marriage, and as they have witnessed how the Spirit of God moves in their marriage and ministry, they have begun to see each other in a different light. Their marriage bond seems to grow stronger every day as they live out their ministry bond and their common desire to help people. They attribute part of their increased intimacy to their ability to minister to each other as a result of their shared experiences in ministry. They also attribute it to the joy of being able to clearly see how God is working in the other’s life and how God continues to mature and use the other for God’s glory.

Along similar lines, one response that resounded loud and clear from Robert and Beverly [redacted] is that one impact that being in ministry together can have on a clergy couple is providing the assurance for each spouse individually that someone else is on his/her side, understands what he/she is going through, and has his/her best interests at heart. This is one of the beauties of sharing a ministry. Robert notes that when the ministry is shared, one does not have to struggle to find someone to discuss issues or get advice about situations that pertain to the ministry, because there is someone else right there in the partnership who is on the same level. Beverly agrees by saying,

> In the more traditional pastoral model with the solo pastor, it’s kind of hard, because you would like to think that someone shares your interest. And sometimes they do, but they can’t see the dynamics of it, I don’t think, in the same way that a dual ministry can. . . . It’s like being in a situation and someone saying they’re going to watch your back, but they’re not really watching your back because they don’t have the same vision or the focus. They haven’t had the pillow talk, so they really don’t know exactly

> where you're going. They may have a notion as to what you're trying to do, but there's a great difference in really having that shared pastoral leadership, [versus] trying to walk it alone.

Learning Objective #6: What the necessary components are for a couple to engage in successful team ministry together

Questions 19, 20, 21, 22, and 26 of the questionnaire sought to draw out insights in support of this learning objective. One of the components for successful team ministry that Yvonne [redacted] brought out was the ability of each spouse to not be overly sensitive or take it personally when the other spouse constructively criticizes or corrects them, but to receive it as encouragement. In the same regard, both Hubert and Yvonne echoed that clergy couples must be intentional to "kiss and make up" when they do not agree on an issue. Sometimes not agreeing on an issue means that couples have to reason together and search the Scriptures for answers. Other times it means they have to go to their separate spaces to reflect, but in the end they must make it a point to come back together and reconcile their differences—to kiss and make up.

Hubert added that another component of successful couple's team ministry is to allow each other's differences to be complimentary as apposed to conflicting. As each spouse focuses primarily on the areas where they are most gifted, and allow the other to do the same, it becomes easier to negotiate the differences in their leadership styles. Negotiating the differences also becomes easier, according to Hubert, when one spouse is established as the primary leader, or the head. Because of the position he has been placed in as the Senior Pastor, and because of their interpretation and understanding of Scripture regarding the issue of headship, they both accept Hubert in this primary leadership

capacity. The expectation, then, is that Yvonne submits to the authority of her husband as the lead pastor, and for her this simply means that she is to be a support to her husband as they partner together in ministry, and not be a hindrance or a challenge.

The [redacted] agreed that mutual respect for each other, both as clergypersons and as spouses, is a vital component for making it work in couple's team ministry. Nathaniel says, "I have to first respect [Terri] as a woman of God and then as my wife." In return Terri says, "I have to show the congregation my respect for [Nathaniel] as my pastor, because he is my pastor. That needs to be made known, even for me, and people need to see that."

The [redacted] agree that part of what it means to be respectful of each other, especially publicly, includes not allowing the problems that may exist at home to be brought into the church, and waiting to discuss issues of disagreement until they are not in the presence of members. To this Nathaniel says, "What goes on at the house shouldn't go on at the church. If we're mad at each other [at home], it shouldn't come out at the church, because we both are spiritually mature enough to understand that we have a responsibility to the people of God." Terri then concludes the thought by saying, "If there's anything [disagreeable] that needs to be said, it needs to be said between us when we are not around or in earshot of anyone."

When disagreements do arise, and they are in the proper position to address them, the [redacted] "agree to disagree," and this is another component that they believe makes for successful team ministry. For the sake of not allowing a place of tension or disunity to exist between them, however, they are intentional about reconciling their differences. Terri says, "I think sometimes people are looking for an avenue to get in [to

the marriage space]. . . . We've learned to talk more. We've learned to talk about what's going on—how we feel."

The [redacted] highlight another factor of successful team ministry as understanding the barriers that still exist to hinder fruitful couple's ministry, but not allowing those barriers to prevent the couple's attempts at building an effective ministry. Terri speaks about some of these barriers as she says, "I face the barriers and traditions of male preachers who are just not going to accept me. And that, I've learned, is their problem. It's not mine. . . . And I'm shamed to say it, but there are some women who are harder than the men, and that kind of surprised me at first. . . . So I had to learn how to deal with that through the Word."

One of the factors that contribute to successful clergy couple ministry as brought out by Robert and Beverly [redacted] is the need for each spouse to be sensitive to the needs of the other and to the rest of their family. Robert says, "What I want to be conscious of is that I respect that which God gave me in my wife and in my children. I [minister to] them and love them as best I can. So, there are some sensitive issues that come up sometimes when the pastor has gone to a meeting and is not there [at home] or is not able to do some of the things that he would normally do." He says that being sensitive to the needs of the family is something that pastors must be conscious of so that the needs of the family are also met.

Another factor for Robert and Beverly involves praying for God's direction when they do not agree on an issue, and understanding that each one seeks and hears from God. To them, this can contribute greatly to the success of a clergy couple. Beverly says,

> I have found that I can step back and allow my husband to make decisions that I do not necessarily agree with. . . . As we have

> grown in [ministry] I understand that [Robert] talks to God and seeks Him for his direction. So even when I do not agree, I know that God has made promises to him, and has promised to be with him. And [God] promised to keep him. And He promised that even when he messes up (ha, ha), [God] knows how to step in and make it alright.

In return, Robert says that he tries to make sure that Beverly is as satisfied as possible with most of the ministry issues, so that they stay unified and on the same page. They agree that when a husband and wife do not agree, it is unhealthy to stay mad at each other because if so, as Robert says, "The devil will use that to the [highest] and will try to drive a wedge so deep that you will never come back together." Beverly adds, "And likewise, [will] cause your ministry to not be effective. And we cannot afford that. So greater than my discontent or [Robert's] discontent is that the work must go on, and it has to be in line with what God wants it to be."

Finally, for Hubert and Yvonne [redacted], the list of components for successful couple's team ministry that really under gird everything else mentioned so far include love, understanding, give-and-take and being flexible. For Nathaniel and Terri [redacted] the list includes ultimate trust in God; trust in each other; praying and studying together; and being open, willing, and totally submitted to what God is doing in the marriage and ministry. Lastly, for Robert and Beverly [redacted], the list includes love for God; love for one another; understanding what God expects from saved individuals and His church; understanding the Great Commission; each spouse understanding the role they play in the ministry and the calling upon their life; allowing the true head [Christ] to lead and being willing to follow; faith; obedience; being filled with the Spirit of God; and a true desire to work together.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Pursing this doctoral project has been a thoroughly rewarding and important experience for the researcher, Juliet Zacharias. As one half of a clergy couple ministry team—a young team who have shared in marriage and ministry for only three years at the time she endeavored to complete this project—Juliet was deeply interested in this growing ministry phenomenon that she and her husband share with an increasing number of clergy couples. She hoped that the insight gained from this study would serve as a sort of wisdom guide that would help her and her husband as their three years of marriage and ministry prayerfully grow into thirteen, then thirty, and beyond. She also anticipated some level of her own transformation to take place as she engaged in the process of learning from other couples who are feeling their own way through the dynamics of ministering with each other.

Indeed, the author's labor was not in vain. Even prior to the project's design, the research conducted led Juliet into a world of historical and theological perspectives that tremendously deepened her understanding of the distance that women have come just to be allowed as full participants in society and especially in the church. This in turn also revealed more fully the distance that has yet to be traveled. Juliet's journey through centuries of perspectives that debased and dehumanized women, a history that gave rise to the more recent voices of feminist and womanist theologies, caused her to embrace

these voices on a much deeper level than she had before. Being a twenty-nine year old Black woman who is a part of a generation that seems to have lost some level of touch with the history that enables them to experience life as they do, such a journey through history enabled Juliet to more fully understand the height and breadth of the shoulders upon which she stands. She definitely has a deeper realization of the struggle and trailblazing that women before her had to endure in order for her and other women ministers to reap the benefits in life and ministry today. She understands that it is because of the grace of God and the redemption of Christ, coupled with the sacrifices of women past that enable her to stand with her husband as an equal partner in life and ministry.

The actual design of the project also was an important and revelatory part of the process. It caused the author to thoroughly think through the dynamics of clergy couple ministry that would make for a fruitful investigation. In the process she came to discover that there were many things she did not consider and probably took for granted regarding clergy couple ministry before designing the project. This part of the process caused her to think through the important questions that she had not even considered, but came to understand as needing to be examined for the sake of her own successful ministry partnership. This process resulted in the Clergy Couple Questionnaire (See Appendix) that was used in the project, and although the questionnaire was designed to gain insights from the clergy couple participants who were interviewed, it has also constituted the questions that Juliet has had to think through for herself.

The most rewarding part of the process for the author was the actual implementation of the project, where she interviewed the three couples that shared in the experience. Gaining the different perspectives and hearing the couples echo each other

was very enlightening. Many of the aspects that were brought out by the study confirmed and affirmed much of what the author suspected about clergy couple ministry, yet hearing the experiences of the couples shed a brighter light. For example, the author previously thought that clergy couple ministry has the potential to make a tremendous impact on couples in a congregation by affirming their partnership in marriage, but listening to how the impact seems to have gone even further in Robert and Beverly [redacted]' congregation, where numerous couples are pursuing ordained and laity ministry together, shed an even brighter light on its impact.

Although the author met her learning objectives while engaging in this study, there are some things that could have been done differently in the project to make the insight gained even richer. First, the three couples interviewed all fit one type of clergy couple, in which the husband is the senior pastor and the wife is the associate or assistant pastor. Although this model tends to be the predominate model of clergy couples who share pastoral leadership, it would have been beneficial to examine couples who consider themselves to be co-pastors with equal authority, as well as couples in which the wife serves as the lead pastor, and the husband as the support pastor. It was the author's intent to have all three types of clergy couples represented in the study, however, she was unable to gain commitments from the other couples she solicited for participation, couples who fit the other two types of clergy profiles.

By only having one of the three types of clergy couples mentioned above represented in this study, certain questions remain unanswered. For example, how would the insights provided by a couple who consider themselves to equally share authority and a couple in which the wife is the primary leader have been different from those gathered

by this study? What is different about the ministry dynamics of the three different types of clergy couples who share pastoral leadership?

Gaining insight from these other types of clergy couples also would have been insightful for the other questions or issues they would have inspired. A couple in which the wife is the primary pastoral leader, for example, may have provided insight into how ready the larger church is to begin embracing the wife as the primary leader when the husband is also sharing the ministry. Also, it may have provided insight into what the characteristics are of a congregation that may be ready to embrace such a model. Likewise, a husband and wife who consider themselves to equally share authority may have been able to shed light on what makes such an arrangement work. One issue that may have been addressed, for instance, is whether the reality for co-pastor couples is that one of the spouses will naturally show forth as the primary leader, even if they decide to share pastoral authority equally.

Regardless of its limits, or perhaps because of them, the process of engaging in this study has revealed some other areas of clergy couple ministry that the author thinks would be fruitful areas for additional research. In addition to gaining insight into the ministry dynamics of husband and wife co-pastors who equally share authority, as well as those in which the wife is the primary pastoral lead, another potential area for further study is the impact that this growing paradigm is having on transitioning the church to more fully embrace women in solo senior pastor roles. It would be worth investigating whether the emergence of more women in pastoral roles, as associate pastors, co-pastors, or lead pastors in clergy couple teams is helping the church to make the slow transition

toward accepting women in solo pastoral leadership in the way that it has always accepted men.

It might also prove worthwhile to investigate more fully how the husband's perspective differs from the wife's perspective on several issues regarding marriage and ministry—similar to a "men pastors are from Mars, women pastors are from Venus" investigation. Since there is no denying that men and women tend to think and act like polar opposites on many things, understanding each other's perspectives, and knowing more fully each other's needs and wiring, would be valuable as husbands and wives seek to grow together in ministry.

Another area for further research would be to gain insight about clergy couple ministry from the congregations served by clergy couples. Since the scope of this project involved gaining insight from the couples themselves, the perspectives of the impact that clergy couple ministry has on congregations was limited to the couples' input. It would be a fruitful study to see what congregants have to say about the couples who lead them. Specifically, it would be worth comparing the perspectives of congregants to those of the clergy couples, to see if they match.

Furthermore, it might be worth investigating the other factors that have a bearing on clergy couple ministry such as race, denominational affiliation and church size. With the scope of this study being limited to examining only three couples, these and other important factors could not be given the necessary attention by this project to determine the extent of their impact. These factors would make for valuable additional research, however.

One final phenomenon that the author thinks would be interesting to investigate is whether or not the personal impact on clergy couples is similar to the impact that couples working together in other professions experience. It would be insightful to see if the benefits and challenges of clergy couple ministry transcend to couples who work together in other professions—if the rewards, joys, and hindrances shared by both in life, marriage and work are similar. Such a study might identify the valuable insights that couples in other professions could provide for clergy couples, and likewise, the valuable insights that clergy couples could provide for couples who work together in other professions.

In conclusion, because clergy couple ministry is still a relatively new phenomenon, there remains a host of information and insight to be gained. The author of this doctoral project hopes that this work's contribution to ministry will be one of the trailblazing works that helps lead future investigators in gaining these insights. It remains yet to be seen what the lasting impact of this growing phenomenon will be on the larger Christian church, as well as on the individual congregations that are blessed to be served by husbands and wives sharing the pastorate.

This doctoral process came at just the right time in the life, marriage and ministry of the author, to help guide her partnership with her husband. She hopes that it will serve as a reference for other modern day Priscillas and Aquilas as they all seek to honor what they believe to be God's original intent for husbands and wives in continuing the work of Christ's salvation in the world.

APPENDIX

CLERGY COUPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Please describe how you came to be joined together in ministry.

2. How would you describe your ministry partnership as it relates to how you share pastoral leadership?

3. Please describe what you believe your individual role and responsibilities are in providing pastoral leadership in your church. How did your roles and responsibilities come to be defined?

4. In what ways do you think your role and responsibilities compliment your spouse's understanding of what their own role and responsibilities are?

5. Please describe how you believe your individual leadership roles are perceived by the members of your congregation.

6. How would you describe the emerging paradigm of husband/wife team ministry that is growing in the church today?

7. Why do you think there continues to be a growing number of clergy couples sharing pastoral leadership?

8. What do you think is the potential impact of the emerging paradigm of clergy couples on the overall Body of Christ?

9. What do you think is the potential impact of the emerging paradigm of clergy couples on helping to transform the larger church's traditional sense of pastoral leadership?

10. What do you believe is unique about a ministry in which a husband and wife share pastoral leadership in comparison to the more traditional pastoral model of the solo pastor?

11. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages for congregations that are led by clergy couples versus those led by a solo pastor?

12. What are the adjustments in both thinking and practice that a congregation must be willing to make in order to embrace a couple's team ministry?

13. In the beginning of your ministry together, how did you help your congregation to make the necessary adjustments to embrace your shared ministry? How do you continue to help your congregation embrace your shared leadership?

Clergy Couple Questionnaire Continued

14. What do you think is the impact that your shared ministry has on couples in your congregation? What do you think is the impact that your shared ministry has on single individuals in your congregation?

15. What do you think is the impact of your shared ministry on developing a sense of mutuality and team consciousness within the lay ministries of the church?

16. What do you think is the impact of your shared ministry on the associate ministers of your church?

17. How do you share the pastoral responsibility of preaching?

18. What do you think is unique about the preaching that takes place in a congregation lead by a clergy couple versus that which takes place in a church with a solo pastor?

19. What are the sensitive issues that a husband must be conscious of to work successfully with his wife in ministry? What are the sensitive issues that a wife must be conscious of to work successfully with her husband in ministry?

20. What do you do when you do not agree on an issue regarding ministry?

21. How do you negotiate the differences in your leadership styles?

22. What do you think are the ongoing challenges of doing ministry as a couple?

23. How has doing ministry with your spouse affected your marriage?

24. Have you individually been strengthened by doing ministry with your spouse? If so, how? If not, please explain why?

25. How has clergy couple ministry been rewarding to you?

26. What do you think are the vital components in building a successful husband/wife team ministry?

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